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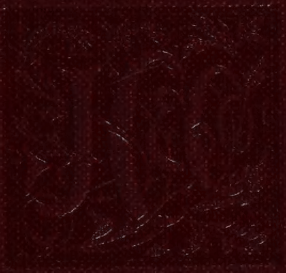

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THE CHRISTIAN OF TO-DAY

THE CHRISTIAN OF TO-DAY

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF
HIS THOUGHT AND LIFE

BY

ROBERT VEITCH, M.A.

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PREFACE

THE present volume is a brief popular statement, for the thinking "man in the street," or for the general Christian reader and enquirer, of the Christian position to-day as to thought and life. It is written from the standpoint of the Free Evangelical. That name is used to describe :— (1) One who believes that the personal Saviourhood of the Lord Jesus Christ is the core and substance of the Christian Gospel, and that the Evangelical Spirit is of its very essence ; (2) One who, whilst seeking to be loyal to the Christian teaching of the past, believes in a progressive Christian faith, and accepts the absolute authority of no traditional creed ; and (3) One who believes that the Bible is to be treated historically and the broad results of criticism are to be frankly and fearlessly accepted.

The religious unrest of the last half century has produced an unfortunate readiness to decry theology ; and many, even among Christians, have passed to an abandonment altogether of serious thinking on the great themes of the faith. There is no final cure for the haze of doubt but the heat or enthusiasm of sincere thought, combined with such beneficent activity as straightway commends itself to heart and conscience.

Preface

Some helpful guidance, it is thought, may be found in a short systematic statement of the Christian position, which, while covering the chief matters, is not cumbered with elaborate discussion, or criticism of other views, but confines itself to exposition.

The treatment is, of course, from the author's standpoint, but it is believed generally to represent the attitude of those here termed Free Evangelicals (a now numerous class), and the growing mind of the Christian Church.

We hope, and believe, there is a tendency on the part of not a few in our day to return to more careful thinking on religious matters. Probably interest is still centred more in the practical issues of religion than in its philosophical or theological groundwork ; but presently it will become plain that all persistent hopeful social work depends on a thorough and vivid faith in God and the Soul ; or, in other words, in man's glorious destiny, and the surety given, in the character of God, of its realisation.

Some readers may find it convenient to begin with Books III. to VI., returning to the more theological sections later.

May the volume be greatly blessed to the strengthening of Christian faith, hope, and love ; and to the enlargement of practical Christian living !

ROBERT VEITCH.

LEICESTER, *June*, 1909.

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Introduction

LEADING FEATURES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?

* * * * *

When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?"—JOB xxxviii. 4, 7.

"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works!
In wisdom hast Thou made them all."—PS. civ. 24.

"All things work together for good."—ROM. viii. 28.

"This is the victory—our faith."—1 JOHN v. 4.

"It is this certainty of ultimate triumph, this combination of the despair of pessimism with an optimism that overreaches and overpowers it, nay, even that absorbs it as an element into itself, which constitutes the unique character of the religion of Jesus."—"The Evolution of Religion" (E. CAIRD), vol. ii. p. 111.

"Our sorrow is the inverted image of our nobleness. The depth of our despair measures what capability and claim we have to hope. Black smoke of Tophet filling all your universe, it can yet by true heart-energy become *flame* and brilliancy of Heaven. Courage!"—CARLYLE'S "Cromwell."

"Our religious beliefs can never be dissociated from our conceptions of the universe; and as the latter grow larger and truer, the former must be transfigured that they may live and shine in the new light."—FAIRBAIRN, "City of God," p. 25.

THE CHRISTIAN OF TO-DAY

INTRODUCTION

LEADING FEATURES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

THERE are certain outstanding features of Christianity which should everywhere secure for it the attention of thinking people. It has faith for the despondent, and hope for the world's despairing souls. It sheds light on life and brings width of outlook. It speaks of comfort and divine help to the uttermost. It is a religion of cheer and a promise of eternal good. It is a Gospel of Grace—proclaims Good News of an overmastering Love which holds the issues of life in its grasp. It is a perpetual fountain of life and love. This is the aspect it bears on our first approach to it. It, therefore, invites, nay, compels consideration. Whether it may verify its promise is another matter. But its leading features commend it to all sincere enquirers into life's meaning and destiny. To these features, we wish, in a prelimi-

nary way, to direct attention. There is first and manifestly :—

1. *Its Sublime Optimism*

Christian optimism is the conviction that the universe of matter, life, and personality bears all the signs of being ordered by eternal love. This optimism is produced by the overwhelming significance of Christ to the Christian. He is the fact of facts. He is the ruling influence in the realising of life's destiny. Each earlier step of existence evidently leads to Him. If the promise in Him may be fulfilled then all shall, at last, be subject to Him ; and the meaning of all things will be seen to be eternal love. The one word " Christ " will spell out all God's ways.

This faith of the Christian, whatever its basis, has proved incorrigible—not to be gainsaid by axe, or gibbet, or martyr-faggot. No suffering, in the Christian cause, has been sufficient to destroy it. No calamity has had power to overwhelm it. The problem of the centuries has not outwearied those who have been possessed by it. In this faith life's stern issues have been met by an invincible courage and hope ; simple souls and those of spacious build have joyfully suffered, exulting in the hour of sacrifice and death. This faith has been exemplified in every generation—for example, in early Christian martyrs ; in those who died at Smithfield ; and in those whom persecution met for many years, in the very childhood of their Christian experience, in the island of

Madagascar. These not only suffered but suffered with joy, assured of the recompense. But what may one say of the countless thousands who, in the same faith, have met life's train of ills, and have withstood the persistent foes of all good? The fidelity of Christian souls and their ever-renewed attempt to win the world for God rests upon the faith that nought may finally defeat them — neither material disaster nor moral calamity.

Christian optimism is historically rooted in the noble faith in the natural world of the later Hebrew mind. This is expressed most comprehensively in the statement with regard to creation, "God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. i. 31). In the book of Job, it is said, in similar strain, that when the foundations of the earth were laid :—

"The morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job xxxviii. 4, 7).

One Psalmist cries :—

"The earth is the Lord's, and the *fulness* thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. xxiv. 1).

And yet another exclaims :—

"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works!
In *wisdom* hast Thou made them all" (Ps. civ. 24).

It is true that the oldest record of creation speaks of a "curse"—a blight upon all Nature—as the consequence of man's sin; but, even so, the curse is not something which has affected Nature essentially, or irremediably. By toil—though evidently the simple conception is that it

would have been better if the result could have been reached without man's laborious activity—the earth will yet yield her increase. This idea of a curse, however, is not according to the general tenour of the Old Testament. The dark thought is outgrown. Nature smiles again in psalm and prophecy. "The earth is the Lord's." She is as the very garment of God. There is no sinister fate in the natural world. Seed-time and harvest shall not cease. The mountains and hills shall break forth into singing ; and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Nature's fulness of blessing shall be realised by the people redeemed (Is. lv.). She becomes in all her varying phases a parable of Providence and Grace. Even her riotous moods are not beyond the divine control. He maketh winds His messengers and flaming fire His ministers (Ps. civ. 4). And, whatever be said of the Old Testament, it is certain that Nature is conceived in the New as travailing with a divine destiny (Rom. viii. 19). She awaits with eager, strained expectancy the full emancipation of the sons of God. In their perfecting the rationale of her own coming-to-be will stand revealed. Even the subjection of Nature in this view is but temporary. She will come, as it were, to her own, in the freedom of her sons. The optimism of the New Testament, indeed, takes the widest possible sweep. "To them that love God, *all things* work together for good." Neither in this world, nor another, by powers seen or unseen,

can the love of God, known in Christ, be thwarted (Rom. viii.).

True, sin has wrought fearful havoc. Christianity is very conscious of the devastation. It knows how the results of sin have become embedded in the life of man and the history of the race; how sinful tendency has become a constitutional defect; and how sin passes on from generation to generation its weakening and corrupting influence. There is no part of life without some measure of its taint. But, again, sin is not essential to human nature, according to the Christian view. It is not irremediable. It may abound, sweep on through life like a devastating flood, but then the grace — the personal love and saving energy — of God "much more" abounds. One may grow apprehensive of the power of sin, and enlarge with vividness and fearfulness his sense of its destructive influence, but Christianity faces him with this "much more" of its faith. There is no doubt then as to the healthful and thoroughgoing character of Christian optimism. It is not the optimism of the superficial view of things; but that which knows the fierceness of the conflict, and is yet confident of victory.

Another outstanding feature of the Christian religion is:—

2. *Its Great Conception of Redemption by Grace*

Here is faith in the God, not of Nature only, but of life. The Christian idea of the world, as

said, is that it is "good." There is no dark power hidden in it which may break loose and scatter ruin. But it is not perfect. It strains after a perfection not yet reached (Rom. viii. 19). It travails with larger destiny. Nature, however admirable its organisation, has not been left to spin along on its own account. It is plastic in God's hands. It is instinct with His Spirit. Its material organisation is entirely subordinate to the higher personal ends for which it was created. In this sense the miraculous is always present in it. In and with it, there is a Providence watching over life which is securing, in part by its ministry, in part by ways which are beyond its province, the highest human well-being. Nature, in our day, is usually regarded as self-contained, but that leads to the iron-bound system of natural law, and the fatalistic view of life; whereas Nature, as we know it, issues in personal freedom. The truth is, there is, at each step, an added power which is perfecting Nature, and, especially, is perfecting human life. The one perfecting is reached in a thousand ways through the other. There is at every point an added grace, a perfecting power.[1]

It is entirely in line with Nature thus conceived, that the grace of God is poured in on man's spiritual being for inward cleansing, the perfecting of character, and the transmutation of evil into good, and of failure into victory. There

[1] *Cf.* Chap. XII.

is personal spiritual contact of God with the soul in redeeming helpfulness. The pure passion of the Divine life, working through the grace of all grace—the gift of Christ—cleanses the inmost founts of personal being, opens up new avenues of entrance into the human heart, and enlarges the divine co-operation with man. The triumphs of grace are not the triumphs of Stoical endurance, but of that divine alchemy which transforms evil into the starting point for some larger good.

The surety of this grace—both as to the fact of it and the character of its working—is Christ. Just such redemption as He has wrought, He can yet work—a redemption most blessed and far-reaching in its scope, the very perfecting of life. He is God's supreme gift, superior to all that is natural ; both the perfect surety and the fulness of all the grace God has been pouring in on life in all the ages, and is yet to bestow, in His personal goodness, in the ages to come.

The Christian is persuaded that there is power enough, and goodness enough, to bring life to its blessed goal. The personal influence of God sweeps in on life in gracious energy. There is no question of what man, simply by development of natural powers, may become. The question is rather as to what God of His goodness will yet make of him. The man insulated from God does not exist. Ignorance or self-pride may make a man think of himself as by himself, but, if he were forsaken of God, he would straightway fall into

nothingness. As in touch with redeeming grace, however, life is charged with infinite possibilities.

So the Christian religion arrests attention still further by

3. *Its Buoyant Conception of the Possibilities of Faith*

There can be no glorifying of the divine by belittling or bemeaning the human. Man is, in his fundamental characteristics, as God made him, and God made him for ends worthy of Himself. Everything in human progress is made to depend on a true union of the divine and the human. All things are possible to grace on the one hand, to faith on the other. Be it observed that everything, from the human side, depends upon man possessing what may be termed the faculty for God. There is in him, by Nature, a power of response to God. The New Testament phrase is that salvation is "by grace" but "through faith" (Ephes. ii. 5). Till moral death ensue, and moral personality cease, the faculty of faith persists. And so long as there be faith—the responsiveness of conscience—even as a grain of mustard seed, there is the possibility still of all God's work of grace being fulfilled. The Master, when on earth, went after those whose personal life had been sin-wasted—"the lost"—those who were the despair of others. It is of the very essence of the Christian spirit that it should do the same. We may not despair. The Master did

not. He ventured everything on His noble appeal to the human heart. He laid aside all power. He came to men with nought to offer but His own pure self-sacrificing goodness. Yet He believed that the appeal would not be in vain. On the faith-response of the human heart He would venture to build the eternal kingdom (Matt. xvi. 18; xviii. 20).

It was when Paul caught sight of this great truth in Christ's teaching that a new world opened to him. He saw in this faith-principle the possibility of all things spiritual, the realisation of that likeness to God without which the soul could find no satisfaction. Here was a means by which the very character of God might pass to His children (Rom. i. 17). Men were born with a capacity for this high sonship. By divine grace the capacity was quickened; personal nature bloomed and bore fruit unto noble character. The simplicity of the redemption in Christ lay, on the one hand, in the grace which was unspeakable—never for a moment to be doubted—and, on the other, in the fact that the child-nature could respond to the Father, for it was born in His likeness. Here was a method, entirely different from the endless discipline of Judaism, whereby one might put on the holiness of God. Paul had practised, in all sincerity and with zealous devotedness, the Pharisaic discipline, but it ended nowhere. Nature chafed under it. But here, in personal contact with the redeeming God, through Christ, was the

possibility of an inward regeneration, the transforming influence of which should be felt in every emotion and habit of life. As the flower to the sun, so man's heart responded to God—at least this was its true nature. Grace!—that was the sun's energy streaming in; faith!—that was the flower upturned, responding through every cell.

Hence, the abounding faith of Christ, and the Christian religion, in man—man as, all the way, the subject of grace. Here, faith was victory. Nothing could finally hinder human well-being, where the feebleness of man linked him with the omnipotence of grace. The strength of God reached its perfect, its gracious expression in help of the weak (2 Cor. xii. 9).

Christianity further commands attention by :—

4. *Its Confident Hope of the Future*

Early Christianity had come to the point that heaven and earth might pass away, but, amid the clash and cataclysm of worlds, there was yet a kingdom which could not be shaken (2 Pet. iii. 7, 11; Heb. xii. 26, 28). This kingdom was constituted of good souls, knit together indissolubly by the love which was born of God Himself. Christ Jesus endured (Heb. vii. 25). Nought vanquished Him. All true life was secure in Him. Eternity could not exhaust His worth. In Him, therefore, was the promise of endless progress for all who would be His.

The characteristic features of Christianity, which we have enumerated, are those of the Christian religion still in all its most vital forms. The religion of Jesus is, to-day, the Gospel of immortal hope, the promise of all good, and this to the simplest and the least who will cast himself on God. To-day there springs up in the heart of him who is responsive to God's grace in Jesus Christ, a sense of great blessedness begun and of untold blessing in promise. We set no bounds to the union of the soul with its God, or to its participation in the very life of God, and the sacred companionship of the blessed. Limitations beset us here and now, but even here we may know something of the peace and blessedness of God. Then the time will come when the shadows will flee away, the day will break, and the soul will be "at home"—"knowing as known."

We have been seeking for a common denominator in religious education in our day. It were grander far to set forth :—

5. *Christianity as the Common Multiple of all Religions*

It is just where other religions are weak that Christianity exhibits its greatest strength. The religion of India represents life as beset by hard inexorable fate, from which the gods even can afford one no escape. Redemption there may be, but it is very far off, attainable only by an almost impossible discipline. The Confucianism of China

knows nothing of God or the future ; and the Buddhism which would fill the gap is a degenerate superstition. The Buddhistic goal, even in its highest religious form, is escape from life through a contemplative oblivion. Despair sweeps over the East in gusts ; and there is ever a dark pall on life. To Mohammedanism (Islam), though God is one, He is afar off ; and life is still under the bondage of a fate one cannot escape.

Christianity, with its omnipresence of the Divine, its God everywhere and in everything but not wholly lost in the material order of things, is already sublimed Hinduism. It has the vision of God and the future which the Confucian needs ; and it has the doctrines of faith and grace by which the ideals of Confucian morality would be vitalised and made the condition of Divine companionship. Possessing all the sympathy for life which is the very heart of Buddhism, its note is victory, not despair. It is not appalled at the evil of the world, because it believes in the redeeming God. To the Mohammedan it presents a God who is more accessible than Allah to the simple prayer of the believer ; and it offers a purer morality, and a nobler heaven. The religions of the world are not to be destroyed by the Christian faith. They are, in it, to find all their own cherished ideals and aspirations more fully realised, and their communion with the Highest sublimed. As of the Master, so of His religion, it may be said, it has come not to destroy, but to fulfil.

Introduction

Christianity is the religion of light, of hope, of redemption. It presents the possibility of life's perfecting. The victory of the good is, to it, sure and complete and final. It knows God as perfect, and perfect chiefly in His grace. It knows Him in Christ, the fact of all facts. There is but One such. Through Him the goal of humanity is to be reached.

BOOK I

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION AMONG THE RELIGIONS

CHAPTER I

RELIGION: NATURAL AND UNIVERSAL

"The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and Divinity."—ROM. i. 20.

"In every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him."—ACTS x. 35.

"The great laws of eternal development, which preside over and direct the progress of belief, infuse order into the seeming chaos, and reveal in every apparent aberration the traces of a superintending Providence."—LECKY, "Rationalism in Europe," vol. i. p. 102.

"It is not affirmed, certainly, that everything in other religions has been untrue. . . . But it is affirmed that this system (the Christian) alone is so fully representative of the Divine Mind, revealing itself to and through the human spirit, that it, and it only, has a complete and peremptory claim to be believed and obeyed."—Dr. STORRS, "Divine Origin of Christianity," p. 5.

"From harmony, from heavenly harmony
This universal frame began:
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man."
DRYDEN, "St. Cecilia's Day."

"Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst Thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things—
With life and nature—purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought;
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart."
WORDSWORTH, "The Prelude."

CHAPTER I

RELIGION: NATURAL AND UNIVERSAL

CHRISTIANITY, though it be unique among religions, and starts anew from the supreme revelation of God in Jesus Christ, is yet broad-based upon the natural religious instincts. Christianity makes a new start, but it must not disown its descent. It came to a race, in some large measure prepared for its reception. It was born in the fulness of the times. The language of religious feeling had been created; religious ideas had become current; religious aspiration had, to a certain degree, ripened; the sense of sin or of alienation from God, through moral defect and delinquency, had begun to oppress the mind of man; the possibility of a divinely-ordered Society—a City or Kingdom of God on earth—had appeared in more than one nation as dream or prophecy; the hope that life was leading to something permanent had begun to dawn. The Christian religion entered into this inheritance. To understand our Christian faith aright we must see it in its relation to religious faith and experience in the broadest forms.

1. *The Dawn of Religion*

The beginnings of religion are lost in the dim mist of the dawn of religious consciousness. We

trace the stream of religious life and thought back through the deep and satisfying experiences of great religious souls, and the breadth of philosophic thought, to simpler and more childlike notions of God and His universe ; and then we come to a mass of beautiful and sometimes fearful mythical story, much the same in many and widely-sundered peoples—story which may be regarded as a first Bible of the race. But the story again is only bodying forth, in forms of greater distinctness, the dim feelings of awe and joy experienced in man's childhood, as the facts of nature and life first affected perceiving minds. It is like tracing the broad and gleaming river, a distinct feature of the landscape, up and up until it is lost in the sponge of the moorland. The source of the stream is not a point but a diffused mass. When we travel back to the beginnings of religion, in like manner, we come upon certain broadly diffused, but dim, religious instinctive feelings. At such a point we have to allow imagination, guided by reason, to reconstruct the conditions for us. It is as when worlds are traced back to star-dust, and resort has to be made to scientific and mathematical theory. We know, as it were, the substance of the matter, but not the exact form.

Life is, in some sense, synonymous with joy. Simplest life cannot be without a measure of cradling comfort. Trials there no doubt were in the first beginnings of man's life, but somewhere there

must have been peace and simple comfort, and somewhere there must have been a waking from a duller animalism to joy in existence—a joy akin to that which is voiced in the soft melody of birds chirping in the dawn and then breaking into chorus ; in the lowing of cattle as they come home to milking ; in the merry shouts of waking children when the sunlight of morning streams in on them—in short, a waking to life.

There was once a waking joy. The dawn was probably very gradual. A thousand years seem but a day in such processes. But men waked at last to the beauty of hill and dale, of wood and stream ; to a felt companionship with bird and beast ; to delight in sunny days ; to satisfaction in looking out over broad and fertile plains, and on the shapes of mountain masses ; and to something, withal, of a sweet deep mystery hidden in things ; to a sense of homeliness and of simple heartfelt communion as though Nature spoke in many accents to hearts that waited with her. Her voice was heard in some Eden, when the cool wind of evening arose, after the heat of day, and Nature's child was alert ; or again at the cock-crowing in the freshness of the morning. The delight in life grew keener as its scope enlarged, and something of the sense of mastery came in.

But man could not wake far, before he waked to the sense of mighty powers about him. There was the large life around him more or less kin to his own ; and there were the powers in the

heaven above him. Above and beneath the Sun was all-glorious, all-powerful. The Sun was Lord of all.

Awe of natural powers, before which man's strength was puny littleness, soon arose. If life found best conditions for growth at first in regions of Eden-quiet and blessedness, increase of numbers, and a roaming inquisitiveness, soon drove men forth. They saw mountains tipped with fire, and belching smoke and ash, from the destructiveness of which they could scarcely escape. They saw the storm sweep down from some Sinaitic height and march over desert plains. The ground rocked with earthquake; the thunder pealed. Amid darkness and terror floods were let loose, and cataracts roared. The heavens flashed with meteors, and sun and moon were darkened. When Nature's powers in their fiercer forms stalked forth what could man do but hide himself from that fearful majesty, creeping for shelter into the caves of the rocks? If something of Nature's sweet mystery spoke to mind and heart when her summer moods were upon her, something also of her awesome mystery came out in these darker experiences.

2. *The Deepening Revelation*

A sense of yet deeper, nearer mystery arose. This tree, with its gracious overshadowing, lived its own life, put on its own new dress of foliage, clothed itself with bloom, and bore its fruit!

What spirit possessed it? This vast forest, with its aisles of wood, and its deep shade, had a spirit all its own! There was something at once awesome and attractive about it as though it might be the abode of a god. This mountain, whose very mass seemed powerfully to affect you and whose heights unscaled were lost in the heavens : what was it? The throne of a Mighty Spirit which dwelt on its summit? The sea, with its " eternal motion " and " sound like thunder—everlastingly " probably made the ancient as the modern exclaim, only with much more reality : " Listen, the mighty Being is awake." Then the sun as he rode forth in such majesty in the heavens and ruled from on high the life of earth in its yearly round, was surely god of gods. The stars twinkling in the deep blue, with measured daily and yearly (apparent) movements, seemed to be his heavenly attendants or the attendants of his bride the moon. All the forms and sights of Nature are prosaic facts to us in comparison with what they were to the childlike imagination of the earliest generations of our race. The forms and forces of Nature they directly personified. All was to them instinct with life like their own, and spirits bad or good peopled all things. Language itself and the simple poetry of early speech stand in proof of these things.

From joy in outward things, tempered with trembling awe, men turned by-and-bye to reflection on the inner life. The world within was as

marvellous as the world without. Thought with its vivid pictures, and their interspaces ; with its flitting fitfulness like flies buzzing in the sunshine —what was it? Was it all one's own? Or, since some thoughts came and went apparently unbidden, was there not another who thought in us? The mystery has cleared somewhat, but in a refined form it remains even to-day. Dreams! Ah, what were they? Did the spirit within actually fly abroad on escapades of its own whilst the duller flesh, for the time deserted of that quick, conscious sprite, remained prostrate? Then instinctive joys uplifted men, and instinctive fears oppressed them. We, of this day, though busied with self-chosen activities, respond, some more, some less, to every mood of changing Nature, and to every condition of physical vigour or languor. The children of the race, much more. Ecstatic joys and fierce passions swayed men in the dance or the fight. They wondered, did some god possess them. All these things created a sense of the mystery of the inner life, and the notion of possession by good or bad spirits.

3. *The Social Conscience*

Then in this progressive development there comes probably a long space in which conscience towards men and gods is growing from tiny rootlets. There is the sense of " mine " and " thine " within the tribe, though it be but the possession

of cave-home, or hut, or of some store of food gathered from the woods. There is duty, as between tribe and tribe, of fealty or revenge—the recognition of favour or injury. Rude and distant beginnings here of a world-wide federation of interests on the basis of justice. Then what has been taken so far as mere caprice or passion on the part of the gods—the expression of their moods of joy or tumultuous feeling—is surmised to be the indication of their pleasure or anger towards men, due to something in human conduct. The storm devastates ; flocks and herds or crops are blighted ; disease rages, because the gods are angered. Armies are conquered or are victorious because the gods favour or oppose the warriors.

From this point arose the practically universal system of sacrifice in natural religion ; worked out to the last most scrupulous detail in Hinduism ; applied, especially in national forms, in ancient Greece and Rome ; and developed with deeper moral significance in later Judaism ; but found expressing the same fundamental ideas among simpler peoples and in early times. Sacrifices have the general meaning of efforts to maintain the good pleasure of the god or gods ; to avert anger or secure good will. They take the special form of tribute for the divine providence in harvest of field or flock ; or of an act of mutual conviviality between the gods and their worshippers ; or, in later times, of endeavours to atone for sin

by offering the blood of a victim in place of the sinner's own forfeited life.

But as conscience, or the sense of moral obligation develops, men come inevitably to the conviction that obedience is better than sacrifice. They think no longer of merely appeasing their god or gods. And at this point we come upon quite definite history. Taking the century roughly from 550 to 450 B.C., we only need to mention Isaiah of Babylon, the Chinese Confucius, the Indian Buddha, and Socrates of Greece, to indicate by names, a great movement which swept mankind with a new consciousness of moral relationships and duties. There may be some discussion as to whether this was only a simultaneous movement, or whether it was connected. In either case, it was most significant. The former alternative is by far the more probable. It would seem as if God, in this great formative epoch, moved upon the face of humanity and created all things new. New civilizations, with a new religious soul, began to be formed. The most penetrative, as well as the earliest in time, of these four great religious leaders was Isaiah, and he saw that there could be no sufficient moral cleansing of the people, no permanent establishment of righteousness, and no sufficient act of atoning sacrifice, save through travailing personal goodness and love, the ideal of which he presented in such transcendent form in his picture of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah.

4. *The One over all*

Parallel with the development of the sense of personal responsibility, and of all the moral issues of life, philosophy was rising in the Greek nation and in Israel to the recognition of one over-ruling Providence, one personal God, supreme ruler of men. This in the Western world. But, in the Eastern, Buddhism and Confucianism were practically agnostic ; and, hence, their comparative moral sterility, notwithstanding noble features in both systems. Grecian philosophy rising more from the side of rational order in the material world, and Hebrew theology rising more from the side of the moral problems of life, were mutually to enrich one another in the Christian faith.

5. *The Preparation for Christianity*

This very simple sketch of religious development suffices to bring us to the threshold of Christianity, and to help us to understand how the Christian religion was founded on a long preparation of natural religion. The language of religion, both in word and idea, needed to be spelled out before lofty conceptions could be phrased and understood.

Religion is a universal instinct. The faculty for religion and its rude beginnings are found among the simplest and least-developed tribes and nations. A new proof of this universal tendency is furnished by the success of a century of modern

Missions. When cannibal South Sea islanders and Central African tribes, and the Hovas of Madagascar, and others in dense heathen darkness and savagery have been re-born in the Christian spirit we cannot despair of any. Besides, if religion were not essential to human life, growing with its growth, and the chief means by which it reached its goal, it would have to be reckoned as a temporary element, and all life would become unreal ; for the great steps of progress hitherto have sprung from or been intimately related to religious advance.

Should any be perplexed by the growth of this essential element of life from such simple and even rude beliefs, let him remember that the knowledge of God was all the way related to the development of life. Philosophic ideas and high theologies cannot be the possession of the child. Yet God was known through the things that were made ; and something of His everlasting power and divinity was felt by simplest minds. Our apprehension of God is still relative to our growth in general and so must it be to the end. We have seen and still see through a glass darkly, or, as though the deep things of God were taught to us in the fairy-tale of the world's life.

Just as man is related downward to all life which has preceded him, and yet is the crown of life's development, so the Christian religion roots in natural religion, but is the flower and fruit of that great tree of life. It is the highest out-

growth of the universal religious instinct of mankind ; and is, at the same time, supreme among the higher religions of the world. The process is, at no point, a human process only. It is divinely guided, inspired, empowered. It is divine as well as human, supremely so in the highest reaches of the onward development.

If religion is universal, it is asked, and if every nation possesses its own religion, why seek to convert the heathen from their natural and national faiths. Indirectly, we have been giving the answer. Religion is not a ready-made article. It is not given full-orbed to any nation. Every religion is reaching out after the more perfect form. Religions set the standards for civilizations and inspire their life. To the degree we are persuaded that we possess the best, or the better, we are in all common honour bound to communicate it.

Chapter II

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION—THE RELIGION OF THE SOUL

"Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them."—2 COR. vi. 16.

"The Jewish religion became the immediate preparation for the religion of unity and reconciliation, in which God is worshipped, not as a power which reveals itself only to perception in the outward world, nor as a power which manifests itself solely to thought in the inward silence of the heart, but as *above* both and *in* both alike."—"The Evolution of Religion" (E. CAIRD), vol. ii. p. 6.

"To search out the divine in all men; to recognise in every one without exception—in the least child and in the abandoned woman—the immeasurable value and eternal destiny of the human soul; to believe in the salvability of each; to seek with persistence this salvation by fanning and tending the divine spark in the soul—that is the chief characteristic of the Master's loving life, and that is His chief moral demand on others."—PFLEIDERER'S "Philosophy of Religion," vol. ii. p. 190.

CHAPTER II

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION—THE RELIGION OF THE SOUL

THE first truth of religion is that there is a personal God, the source and sustainer of all things, who is Wisdom and Holy Love. But the second truth is almost equal to this first, at least so far as all the human value of religion is concerned. It is the truth which the Christian religion finally came out upon and made peculiarly its own; namely, the union of God and the soul through kinship of nature. All religion more or less implies it, even though, in some forms, the transcendent One seems hidden in the infinite and unapproachable Heaven of His own bliss and self-regard. Religion always means some kind of intercourse between God and man. But Christianity came out into the full light of the intimate and essential union of Divine and human life, and the whole outlook of life was changed. God was Father of all men. Based on that natural kinship, full personal communion was possible between the Father-God and any soul responsive to the appeals of His grace. A divine and ideal sonship was thus opened up to man by the deeper Christian revelation. Infinite riches of life gleamed into view, and that for every soul.

It was as though the heavens opened, and the glad message came to every man: "This is my beloved Son." Our conceptions of man and God are enlarged side by side. They are interrelated and correspond. The noble idea of God which the Christian possesses has for its counterpart the Christian conception of the dignity and immense possibilities of human life. There is a very world of meaning in the statement that we are "sons of God"; for, as the Apostle said, "If sons, then heirs." The two great truths respecting God and man, and their intimate union, are presented in one revelation—the revelation of the Son of God.

1. *God in Nature and Man*

The old natural religion of the many races of the world discovered God in the wonders of the physical universe—in earth and heaven; in the mysteries of life through all the vegetable and animal orders; and in the deeper mysteries of thought and the growing voice of conscience. When, however, the end of Nature was seen to be man, and the perfect note of man's history was found in Christ, then the secret which had been hidden from the foundation of the world stood revealed.

We cannot divorce man from Nature. He is a part of it. We cannot divorce the interpretation of the two, they are inseparable. Man and his world are one. The Creator of both is one.

The Religion of the Soul

The soul of man, with all its moral development, is but the innermost spirit and purpose of Nature coming out — the long-hidden secret revealing itself. The material world is the necessary basis of vegetable life ; vegetable life is the necessary basis of animal life ; and animal life, with all its growing sensibility, and all its marvellous instinct, is the basis again of a higher moral conscious being. The human soul is not bodyless. It cannot begin its life without a material body, even if it may rise in the course of development to a condition in which it may dispense with that. Nature looks away to man ; has in it the promise of the spiritual. The spiritual, in the human form, on the other hand, starts from a natural basis. It is something more than the natural, but the natural is an indispensable condition of its being. The interpretation of man must be the reading of his whole complex nature, as both natural and spiritual.

2. *Nature-Religions and Religions of the Soul*

Now as it is impossible to separate the interpretation of man from the interpretation of Nature, it is also vain to separate the highest form of religion, the religion of the soul, from other forms in which God has been worshipped. Nature and man are the revelation of God ; and God must be worshipped in His full-orbed character. A spacious reverence has gone out of modern religion, largely because of the long-continued alienation of

scientific and religious thinking, dating from the Middle-Age jealousy of the lay mind and the branding of new discovery as heterodoxy. It is time the alienation entirely ceased. We must carry with us the full riches of a modern nature-religion into the higher religion of conscious spiritual life and holy social intercourse.

There are other reasons than those named for protesting against any such divorce of thought. We come to the higher religion only through the developed instincts of the race, born of long contact with Nature ; instincts which are the inheritance of our own generation. The child who is the offspring of cultured feeling has a natural tender awe of earth and sky, a joy in beauty, and a sympathy for life which give form to his earliest religious thoughts. As life advances deeper questionings, larger human relationships, and increasing moral responsibility, stir in the soul the feeling of need of the Personal God. But these stages merge into one another. They are aspects of one religious nature. They are phases of our relationship to one God. So when we come to the child-races of the world, they are to be credited with instinctive feelings deeply akin to our own, and with some growing sense of needs, however dimly understood, which can only be satisfied by our own soul's Saviour and God. The human heart is one in character the world over. The universal religious feeling is instinctively reaching out after the perfect form of religion—the form which, we

firmly believe, we know. Were this not so Christian missionary enterprise would be vain, and the Brotherhood of Man would be an empty dream. There would be a fatal cleavage in the history and unity of the race.

The Christian religion is one of the higher religions of the world, which, believing God is revealed in Nature and life, find Him still more deeply revealed in the soul—in the developing conscience, and in all the movement towards personal and social well-being ; that is, towards personal holiness and social righteousness. The Christian religion, specifically, and in the clearest, deepest sense, believes in the intimate intercourse of the personal God—the God of goodness and moral ideals—with man, as the recipient of His inner nature, the revealer and achiever of His will. Here, at last, the personal God stands face to face with His child ; the son begins to look into the face of the Father with an unspeakable trustfulness. And so intimate is the relationship that sin does not entirely alienate. The Christian's God is the atoning God, the Redeemer, in travail for His children's perfect life. It is as though man's soul returned through Nature and Spirit to the Father-God from which it came.

3. *Christianity, and the other Religions of the Higher Type*

The Christian religion, we have said, is one of the higher religions of the world. In the most sum-

mary fashion we wish here to make a comparison. Hinduism, the religion of 200 millions of India's 300 millions of population, is a religion in which the human mind may be said to be intoxicated with the conception of Deity. The thought of God overpowers the mind; and the Deity is conceived as so exalted and unapproachable that human interests are the mere play of His fancy, the evanescent forms of His will. Human life is but as the foam on the waves of the sea of eternal being. Many may be the forms of Brahma, but this serene disinterestedness characterises them all. The Hindu is naturally and profoundly religious, and, having placed his God in heights serene, he is bound to make lesser gods, and deify every form of existence. "The Hindu Pantheon," says Monier Williams, "has a place for everybody and everything." This means that life is overlaid by superstitious fears. Everything becomes iron-bound. And the tyranny of the caste-system is but the social counterpart of such a religious faith.

Buddhism, which made conquest of the Indian mind and life, and held it for a thousand years, and which, outlawed from its native land, is now the chief popular form of religion of the nearly 400 millions of the Chinese, is most Christian on the side of its sympathy with life. This is not with life, however, in its fulness of beauty and strength; but with the pain-stricken, whether man or beast, and with the sorrow-laden. To the Buddhist life is an evil,

and religious discipline is one protracted method of escape from it. The particular interests of life are all vain ; they fetter the soul. The wise seek to be freed from them. Buddhism shuts the door on all questions about God, and the origin and issue of things. These only lead to speculation, and involve men the more in the thraldom of life. Better than a religion which only adds to man's burdens is a humanitarian sympathy and service. The annihilation of all personal desire is the true goal. In despair of life, Buddhism thus sought to lighten sorrow. Life was ruled by a kind of dark and hidden fate. Happy was the soul which found release, though after many rebirths, in the oblivion of Nirvana. Happier still was he who could attain to this Buddhahood by one supreme effort of self-sacrifice, though that amounted to self-immolation. We, here, but briefly indicate the mind and spirit of that religion which most nearly approaches Christianity in its humanitarian temper.

Confucianism, in like manner, has nothing to say about God, though, in a distant way, it believes in the rule of High Heaven. It is concerned only with this life. The question whence man came and whither he is going never troubled Confucius. He was bent on the perfecting of the Middle Kingdom ; and the vice-regent of the heavenly powers was to be found in the Emperor of China. Man could achieve his own salvation, and it was to be realised in the good society on

earth. The "city beautiful" could be reared on *terra firma*, by the perfecting of civic life. High Heaven, for its part, strictly maintained the laws of life; prayer was vain. There is no missionary enthusiasm in Confucianism, for the Chinaman is too contemptuous of every other land but his own. The Chinese are the only elect. Yet, as a purely moral system, Confucianism must be ranked very high.

Mohammedanism, like Judaism, believes in one over-ruling beneficent Providence. It, too, is a religion of the law and of tradition based thereon; the Koran being the rule of life. It is a more modern Pharisaism. It is a religion of prayer without sacrifice. Its notion of a kingdom of God on earth is a world-wide Mohammedan Empire, and it therein repeats some of the limitations of Judaism. It also looks to earthly power for the advancement of this kingdom, and appeals to the sword. Its perpetuation of slavery and its treatment of women are serious defects. Being so much a religion of the book it is very conservative. Yet it in many ways promulgates a high morality, and shows possibilities of reform from within on spiritual principles. We may never abandon hope of a religion of prayer.

Stoicism as a religious philosophy came nearest to Christianity. It believed in one supreme God who was Father of all men. The universe as the outcome of divine reason was wholly good; the seeming evil was necessary to the good. The

system required benevolence towards all inferiors, and equanimity under all circumstances. The Stoic held that the world was his city ; that is, he was superior to national insularity.

Judaism, when it had worked through its great prophetic reformation, had reached the conception of God as Father of all men, who revealed Himself in Lawgiver and Prophet ; and sought the redemption of men through travailing love like that of His Suffering Servant. But Judaism never quite emancipated itself from the limitations of its own great faith. Its pre-eminence engendered self-pride. It was conscious, in its day, of its superior religious and moral system. God had specially revealed Himself through Israel ; so He was conceived as partial to Israel. He had elected Israel for her sake, not for the world's sake. In His ideal kingdom Israel must be first. In later days, too, the nation receded from its noble prophetism, and became involved in the priestism of the Sadducee, and the legal discipline of the Pharisee. These were interposed between God and the soul.

4. *The Distinctive Notes of Christianity*

Over against these chief religious systems Christianity has conceived of God as both exalted in power and holiness, and, at the same time, wrapped up in all the interests of His children. Life has in it untold riches and an inexhaustible future, because all the Father is He is for His

children. Society on earth is to become increasingly worthy of God, the embodiment of His will ; but it merges in a more perfect society eternal in the heavens. Christianity starts not from a book, or from a moral code, but from One who is the Living Word, the incarnation of that spirit and principle from which the perfect society grows. To the Christian religion, sin is an awful fact, a something gone wrong through the misuse of man's freedom ; nevertheless God is bent on over-ruling all unto good. It frankly seeks to be the religion of mankind on the basis of human fraternity and equality ; and no privilege.

The Christian religion is of all religions the religion of intimate personal union between God and the soul. The voice of God is in the inmost heart. God companions with us to reproduce His life there, for the truth of man is the truth of God. They are one in essential nature and character. This is the deep sense in which Christianity speaks of God as the Father-God and of man as His child. The typical and perfect child is Jesus. Every other system lacks this personal embodiment of its ideal life, and the faith in an eternal Redeemer. All religion is in essence a dependence on some higher power which can help ; but Christianity presents to the soul One who has achieved moral victory right in its own sphere ; One who is the assurance of God's purpose of grace in all life's ways ; and One who is eternally the soul's stand-by in all its need. No religion,

as this religion, presents God as Himself the Redeemer, in travail for our good ; One who bears our griefs, carries our sorrows, and is bruised for our iniquities. Other religions teach the beneficence of God, but none have reached the height of the thought that Love could go the length of making common cause with the sinner. Christian holiness proves its power by bringing its strength to saving work. The immaculateness of God's holiness, according to the Christian conception, is seen in this that He, like Jesus, can come to close quarters with sin without being defiled. This was the righteousness of God which Paul marvelled at and adored.

Now, similarly, no religion emphasises, as the Christian religion does, the inward truth of the soul to God. " Works " are entirely secondary. What matters is the very attitude of the soul when it meets its God in secret ; the love and truth of man's heart answering to the love and truth of God's. Sincerity, fidelity, is the only requirement. All else follows, for God Himself dwells with him who is of a lowly and contrite heart. Personal guidance, illumination, and moral strength are ministered to him. God shapes his way and moulds his character. The Spirit of God quickens every power that the soul may take on the full character of the Christ in growing measure.

In no other religion is there such a complete union of morality and religion as in Christianity.

Service of man is service of God. There is no sacrifice here but the sacrifice of holy living. There is no life with God and delight in Him, which is not turned again immediately on His Kingdom among men where all His heart is.

It is here particularly the conquering optimism of the Christian faith is seen. That optimism, as has been said, is incorrigible. No suffering has daunted it. The persistence of sin has not quenched it. It still believes in the possibility of every soul's perfecting ; and in the winning of all nations to the life in Christ. It believes that the Redeemer will yet see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. It is but the height of reason and love to cherish such a faith and wish it established in all the earth.

BOOK II

THE CONTENTS OF A CHRISTIAN FAITH

Chapter III

THE SOURCES OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

"The Son of His love, in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins, who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation."—COL. i. 13—15.

"There is . . . . in common with natural science, in the study of living history, a gradual approximation to a consciousness that we are growing into a perception of the workings of the Almighty Ruler of the world, that we are growing able to justify the eternal wisdom."—"Bishop Stubbs' Letters," p. 116, W. H. HUTTON.

"The great religious interest associated with investigations respecting the literature of the Bible carries with it the necessity of being on our guard against the spirit of indolence, the power of tradition, and the domination of the 'letter.'

"As Jesus' instruction did not rest on a system, but on the inner life, He secured His results less by words appealing to the understanding than by the influence of His personality upon the dispositions of men. The written word easily grows stiff and loses the warmth of what was spoken in the ear."—REUSS'S "History of the Holy Scriptures."

CHAPTER III

THE SOURCES OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHRISTIANITY, we have said, is broad-based upon the natural religious instincts. It carries with it, into higher spheres, the essential features of the child-religion of the race. The Christian mind stands in reverent awe of the majesties of heaven and earth ; but of the still greater majesties, also, of thought, and conscience, and social duty—the witness of the Divine life in the soul and in mankind. Religion is universal ; the Christian religion is the flower and fruit of religious development. As such our religion believes it may satisfy the noblest aspirations of mankind. It has come not to destroy but to fulfil. If it be what it believes itself to be, it will one day appear as the perfection and legitimate outcome of all faiths. It is to be compared with those higher religions which have found the chief witness of God not in creation but in the new creation ; not in Nature's wonderful order, but in the higher order of human life and history, and the promise of an imperishable society of the good. Here Christianity sheds a world of light, where other faiths grope in the dimness of the

dawn. Here God is revealed as Father of men, bent on realising, at any sacrifice of Himself, the personal perfection of His children. Here faith is exhibited in man's essential oneness with God. Sonship to Him is possible, and possible in fullest measure. The beginnings of the new order, or Kingdom of God, are present in Jesus Christ. He is its sure foundation, the new Man. Through Him the new Society is not only possible, but assured.

We see, then, the relation of Christianity to the religion of past days ; and its relation to forms of religion still prevailing to-day. As a matter of fact, nearly all types are still represented in the world. But how, now, is the Christian faith of to-day built up? And, first, what are its sources?

1. *The General Sources of our Faith*

We cannot begin with our special Christian thoughts of man, and his redemption, unless we believe that we share in one large rational order, which embraces all things. The popular mind may take this order for granted until it is startled by some volcanic eruption, or cyclonic flood, or storm of pestilence ; or some meteor appears in the heavens. The cultured scientific mind, on the other hand, calculates when the energy of the sun will be exhausted ; and anticipates, in this or in some other way, changes in the physical order on the widest scale. Is there after all, then, a rational order? Yes, all science implies such an order.

It is believed that every department of a particular science, say, of chemistry, fits into a larger whole. There it finds its adjustment to other departments and its own fullest meaning. There is no fear in the scientific mind but that a perfect science is possible of each phase of Nature, though, to our present view, this means only an infinite approximation. Then the phases of Nature represented by the several sciences are again related to one another. Chemistry may merge into physiology on one side ; into electricity on another. Of the sciences one combined system is possible. This is the faith behind all scientific investigation. Out to the widest reaches of the material universe this order is believed to extend. The worlds on worlds in space are believed to attract one another according to the laws of gravitation. And, indeed, as a fact, one order does exist. The universe continues, and forms one consistent whole. As far as man has investigated he has found Nature interpretable by reason. If reason is found everywhere in Nature, and Nature is one, then there is one Master-mind. That is a first and chief article of religious faith. We derive it to-day not from a superficial and childlike view of the world, but from that careful and comprehensive consideration of Nature and her ways which science represents. There is no divorce of science and religion in the rational form of religion. All the well-established results of science are taken up into our faith. We worship

the great creative mind and will through the marvellous discoveries of its ways by the science of our time.

Then history brings its witness to faith. The population of the world is not composed of so many millions of individuals cast out singly upon the sea of life to drift. It is composed of families, of nations, of races, infinitely various, but "of one blood" and of one essential spirit. Mankind is one whole. History, like science, has many departments, but it is one. In the nation, out of personal histories of endless variety, one society is created, having distinctive characteristics, aims, and spirit. Out of the clash and conflict of peoples and races we yet move towards "the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the world." One Master spirit dominates the life of mankind. It is the common faith by which men live, though held in various forms, that there is "one far-off divine event" towards which "the whole creation moves." Without some such faith implicit, men could not live and strive. History, then, has a meaning—a meaning commensurate with its greatness. It, too, is rational. This is an absolutely necessary working faith. If life is meaningless, why trouble? All striving will end in confusion. That dark unbelief, however, does not to any great degree assail men—thinking men. The broad providence seen in the evolution of history gives rise to large faith and hope.

Then beyond the contributions of science and

history to our general faith, in modern days, there is the constant contribution of our own moral nature. Man is a moral being. There is in him what Kant called the categorical imperative—that is, there is in him a " must " which will not be set on one side. He can find no peace with himself except in the whole-souled pursuit of the best, so far as he knows it, both for himself and for others. And corresponding to this there is a faith in the triumph of the good which laughs at impossibilities. This moral element entirely dominates faith, and gives its own strong colour to our belief in the rational character both of the material world, and of human history. The imperative in us would be quite irrational, indeed, if it were impossible of realisation. Seeing this imperative will not be gainsaid, it drives us along the line of belief that all things, visible and invisible, must work together for good. The moral element has been the controlling influence in all the higher history of mankind. It still urges the leading peoples of the world to ideal goals.

Here, then, for the modern man, are the general sources of religious faith — Science, History, Morality. Each is a sacred book—a Bible. The thinking man cannot, without injury to faith, fail to read in these books, and ponder their teaching. Should he fail so to do, he drifts aimlessly, altogether uncertain of the issues of life ; and he may drift to unbelief for lack of thought. Indeed, in our day, he cannot shelter himself

from questionings which are only to be quieted by sincere and diligent enquiry.

2. *The Special Christian Sources of our Faith*

Besides the general sources of faith, the Christian has his special sources. He starts anew from Christ. Nature issues in man, its sum and crown. In the centre of human history stands Jesus, at once its perfect product and new basis. All things point to Him. The riddle of the universe is solved in Him. Its meaning is seen in Him. What it was all making for is there revealed. Nature was a basis for human life; human life has its goal in a Christian society—a Christ-dominated society—a Kingdom of God. If it be said that the world is a small part of the universe, and that the visible universe may be as nothing to the invisible, so be it, yet the part is not at discord with the whole, or that part would soon cease to be. This is the foundation of a Christian completion of material science and of world history. These merge at last into a divine philosophy, or theology, of which Jesus Christ is the supreme word.

Just as the moral imperative—conscience—is the divine voice *in* the soul, Jesus is the exact expression of the moral ideal, the embodiment of the moral imperative in a perfect life—the voice of God *unto* the soul. He is, for the Christian, the Word of God, the living Word. God's imperative comes to us warm with life, persuasive

with love. Aspiration has been translated into life and deed ; the ideal has become real. All this accounts for the directness of Jesus' authority over the soul. He is as though He voiced our inmost life. We follow Him in spirit or stand condemned of our own heart. He cheers us onward, and with an over-powering persuasion bids us realise our own true self.

He is not only our Revealer, but our Redeemer. He turns towards us the strong, pure life, in a passion of redeeming love. He wrought for mankind the master-deed of redemption, simply because He lived a life wholly devoted to the moral well-being of men, and their rescue from sin's taint and thraldom ; and poured out that life in death, still in the same spirit. The Cross, in all its essentials, was no incident merely. The spirit of the Cross was in the travail of soul which characterised the life. The cost of this redemption none may tell. That is the secret of God and His Christ. But something of the cost is estimated in the passion which our Lord's passion enkindled in others ; or in the weight of despair and corruption it lifted from the world's heart.

The life of Jesus rooted itself in the best spiritual teaching of Judaism ; and it issued in the founding of the Christian Society or Church. He is, in part, to be understood through both ; so that the records of both are, in a secondary sense, our Christian sources.

The Hebrew sacred literature presents to us

a record of a people who came, under the leadership of their great prophetic teachers, to the discovery that the bond between God and His people was none other than a moral one. To trace this idea in its growth, from the point at which Jehovah is regarded as a national God and as the perquisite of the people of Israel, up to the point at which He is losing all mere blood-relationship to a small and exclusive nation, and is becoming the God of all the earth, who uses any and every instrument for His righteous ends, is to be greatly impressed with the inspiration which guided the remarkable succession of Hebrew prophets. The climax of this movement of thought is found in the writings of Isaiah of Babylon (Is. ch. xl.—lxvi.), who, though an exile among a band of exiles, believed still in the mission of Israel as the missionary nation of the world, and believed in the God whom Israel knew as the God of the whole earth, who could use His servant for His great world-ends. The people had sinned, it is true ; therefore their captivity. Even so, however, God had not forgotten, could not forget His servant. Through discipline of suffering He was fitting Israel for a great spiritual work ; that, taught the deep lessons of God's providence, he might teach again. Yea, the true souls of the nation had been called upon to suffer vicariously. As though blighted of God, they seemed like a shrivelled plant. The truth was they had borne their people's griefs and carried their

people's sorrows. Yet the travail of Jehovah's Servant should not be in vain. Through it he should redeem many, and spiritually triumph. Here was the Gospel before the Gospel, the picture of a saviour-people suffering for righteousness' sake so far as its true-hearted sons were concerned. In such prophetism was Jesus nurtured. It is the same spirit as was upon this prophet and those for whom he spoke, which Jesus declares, in the memorable day at Nazareth, is upon Him—the spirit which could bind up the broken-hearted and proclaim liberty to captives ; the spirit which could give joy for mourning ; the spirit of travailing love. Jesus gave to this spirit a vastly wider application. Isaiah of Babylon was first concerned for the redemption of Israel ; then for the employment of Israel in the world's redemption. But Israel for him remains central — the pivot of the world. The emphasis of Jesus was on the *world's* redemption, though He sought first to accomplish this through His people. Jesus was the child of prophetism rather than of law and ceremonialism ; yet He came to fulfil all His people's true hopes, and, in so far as it is a record of life and thought leading on to the issue of a world-redeeming movement, the Old Testament is one of our Christian sources.

Jesus is again to be understood through the men whom He inspired, and through the great movement of world-redemption which He set on

foot. These are presented to us in our New Testament literature, which is our other Christian source. The New Testament writings are, in a peculiar sense, instinct with the life out of the midst of which they arose. The new, inspired, love-filled life is enshrined here for all time ; and this it is which gives to our Christian Scriptures their pre-eminence. They glow with life of a new and higher order. Christianity gave a mighty uplift to the world's moral standards, and, even "within a quarter of a century of Jesus' death, life in Christian circles had passed to new moral levels, and had found its dynamic undoubtedly in the Lord Himself."[1] The power of the early Christian society as an actual organ of redemption is testimony to the marvellous personal influence of Jesus. The New Testament, as witness of these things, is to be regarded as the after-manifestation of the Lord.

The Word of God to the Christian, then, is Christ—Christ as the flower of Israel's better life, and the founder of the Christian Church. The Christian starts anew with the direct call of God in Jesus ; but not with this as an isolated phenomenon. Christ comes to us as part and parcel of the world's personal history. The incarnation is real. He was born a Jew. We are not warranted in treating the fact other than it is given. On the other hand, He is to be seen and known as the world's Messiah, the ideal and satis-

[1] *Cf.* "The First Christians," by Robert Veitch, p. vi.

faction of man's deepest and most essential aspirations. We must take the authoritative Word in all its human setting. Christian life and Christian society are being evolved amid ever-changing conditions, and the Christian spirit must find ever-new expression. Christianity is a spirit of life ; it is not a legal system—a code. Christians cannot evade the responsibility which this entails. There *is* no Book which is authoritative in the letter. In the Book itself it is the *spirit* which quickeneth.

Chapter IV

JESUS THE SON OF GOD

"God . . . gave unto Him a name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow."—PHIL. ii. 9, 10.

"He hath inherited a more excellent name than they."—HEB. i. 4.

"Jesus, the purest among the mighty, the mightiest among the pure."—JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

"Nor even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour to live so that Christ would approve our life."—JOHN STUART MILL.

"He was Himself conscious that the highest object of divine love, the Revealer and Perfecter of God's final decrees regarding salvation, did not become an object of divine love only, because He was to bring this about, but He must have been so from the beginning."—WEISS'S "Life of Christ," vol. i. p. 305.

"As *Son of Man*, Jesus stood in a relation of solidarity and sympathy with men. As *Son of God*, He stood in a similar relation to God."—Prof. BRUCE, "The Kingdom of God, p. 186.

CHAPTER IV

JESUS THE SON OF GOD

JESUS was something altogether new. His appearance was the starting point of a new history of mankind. He not only marks a new epoch, but history, as it dates from Him, has an altogether higher outlook. It is charged with faith and hope; with faith in God, and inexhaustible hope concerning man, such that it stands on a new and higher plane in comparison with what preceded. The coming of Jesus is not to be likened to the evolution of species from species in natural history, or even to the development of genus from genus; but it is akin to one of those great changes like the rise of life — a new creation — or like the dawn of moral consciousness. Jesus is the new man.

1. *The World's Great Fact*

Take the widest survey of history, and He stands out clear. He is the world's transcendent fact. Human history is another thing because He has appeared in it. He casts light back on all the providence of God. The secret of creation is unfolded in Him. Not only is life's high promise told out in Him; but He is the chief power by which that promise is realised. He is

that Divine Power which made the world, appearing for the achievement of its greatest work, namely, the perfecting of personal character and the bringing in of a permanent life of social blessedness.

All this Jesus is by the very fact of Him. Nothing that He taught, or in His earthly ministry achieved, could be to us what it is, apart from the great personal fact, Jesus. His all-important achievement was Himself. He was His Gospel. The person, the life, the uniqueness of it, the power of it for all highest ends, the permanency of it—that is the great thing. HE was ; HE is ; and life for evermore is gauged by that. Life !—that is Jesus. That tells all the tale. He realises manhood. God's Word is there.

2. *The Holy One*

Look now at the great Gospel-Fact, in its special significance. It is often said that Jesus was sinless. That may easily mean too little. Sinlessness is innocence up to the point of development which any soul has reached. The writer of *Hebrews* says, Jesus was sinless — " without sin "—just when he is insisting that our Lord was subject to the temptation and trial of our human lot (Heb. iv. 15). He means that Jesus escaped from any failure to which this subjected Him. Paul says this and more when he declares : " Him who was sinless — ' knew no sin '—God on our behalf made to be sin (*i.e.*, to assume the

sinful lot of men); that we might become *the righteousness of God* IN HIM" (2 Cor. v. 21). He describes the Lord as a perfect fount of holy character, when he says: "By the *obedience* of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. v. 19). The description goes still a stage further, when it is said: "It pleaseth the Father that in Him should all *fulness* dwell." The idea is that in Jesus the very holiness of God appeared in full measure. We cannot prove sinlessness. That is a negative quality. But we may recognise that the uniqueness of Jesus was pre-eminent in the fulness and strength of His holy character. This was a power which showed itself in redeeming effect on wayward and sinful souls. It was recognised as the very power of God unto salvation. It was God's own holiness energising and fully occupying the life of the Divine Son. We cannot analyse the over-mastering and complex impression which a holy character makes. We reverently bow before it and yield ourselves to its sway. It is found, therefore, to be impossible to describe the holy character of Jesus in detail. His sinlessness is, in that sense, indescribable. It evades you even while it convinces you. The holiness partakes of infinitude. No analysis avails where the first-hand impression is not indisputable. You may, indeed, see that others were overpowered by it; and, so far, that is convincing. John the Baptist says he is not worthy to stoop and unloose the shoe latchet of Jesus. Peter

declares that no lofty name is sufficient for his Lord, save "the Christ"—God's Anointed. Paul and many another found that to love Him was the means of reaching greater personal perfection than by any other way (Rom. viii. 4; John xv. 5). His teachings came with authority as if direct from the soul to the soul. They searched the heart. They cowed the Pharisee; and encouraged the humbly penitent. His "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden" is the cry of a great, pure, strong, renewing, comforting personality. The main impression left upon His followers was that they had seen Him who was the perfect embodiment of the ideal of Isaiah—one who was wounded for the transgressions of others. His suffering was perfectly vicarious. To-day, even at the distance of centuries, He stands to us as the full expression of the moral imperative.

"O Lord and Master of us all,
Whate'er our name or sign,
We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call,
We test our lives by Thine.

Alone, O Love ineffable!
Thy saving name is given;
To turn aside from Thee is hell,
To walk with Thee is heaven."

It is thus, then, we apprehend the perfect, the unique character of the Lord Jesus. He was one of us, man as we are men; yet, in the very article of manhood, He knows no peer. His is the name which is above every name; worthy of adoration, indeed, in earth and heaven. Almost the whole New

Testament might be quoted in testimony of the fact that He was acknowledged as absolute Lord of the soul. His followers delighted to call themselves " the bond-slaves of Jesus Christ." Life is perfected if He may rule in them, and they may know no will but His. No language is too exalted to express His greatness, according to their mind and feeling. Yet all this is true, though in life He eschewed every form of eminence or distinction, and remained the humble Nazarene ; yea, though He died the death of the Cross. He knew no greatness but that which was directly the outcome of His character. And, withal, Christianity is Christ in a way that no other system is to be named by its leading personality. The allegiance is not to the system ; it is to Him. Salvation is not by the system ; it is by Him. We cannot go behind the verdict of the noblest of those who came, in the first days, under His supreme influence. Either the simple followers of Jesus have truly reported of Him, or they, fishermen and the like, have created a figure, which is incomparable. The unique personality, indeed, is the surest of all sureties.

3. *The Meaning of all Things is Jesus*

Now let us return to the point ; the coming of Jesus is the great outstanding fact of all history. We must apprehend the fact and its significance if we are to view life aright. Everything is seen in the wrong perspective, if Christ Jesus and His

relation to us and the world is not taken into account. We then judge of life minus its greatest and grandest feature. Life became a new thing and appeared in an entirely new light to those who came under Jesus' sway. We cannot begin to be Christian, or think as Christians, until we know that He is named by the incomparable name—that He is Lord.

Granted that Jesus Christ is unique in His holiness — in His moral perfectness ; that He is an essential part of the world's natural development, the true outcome of history ; and that through Him manhood has the clearest promise of reaching its goal, then He who is the " life " and the " way " is also the " truth." The Son of Man is also the Son of God. In Him the very soul of things is revealed. He IS the very soul of things. Creation stands revealed in Him according to the high purpose which was wrapped up in it from the beginning. The soul of things is Love. The personal factor in history is chief. Redemption is the key-word of the world. Material creation and spiritual history are to this end. Miracle is at best a glint of the greater fact that Love rules all, that Providence is in everything. We may rest too much faith on incidents. Hence our Master's anxiety that His works of healing should not withdraw men's thoughts from the more permanent facts of providence and grace. Right in the midst of the world's history, the fact of facts—Jesus—appeared. He is the great

miracle. This is the great revealing event. The might of the universe was bent towards this issue. Since Jesus is the grand outcome of all creation ; since personal life like His, love like His, is at the heart of things ; then in Him we know that personal love which must rule in heaven and earth unless all things end in contradiction. The goodness of the life revealed forbids this last thought. Jesus is our surety that reason and love rule, everywhere and in all. Everything, says Paul—the world, life, death, the present and the future —all is yours : Ye are Christ's ; Christ is God's (1 Cor. iii. 22). To know Jesus is to have looked into the heart of God and to be assured that all is well, here or anywhere.

When Christian minds had time to reflect on the great gift of God in Jesus, when they discovered that they had beheld the glory of one altogether unique among God's children (John i. 14), and unique in His grace and truth, they said Jesus could not be an after-thought of God. They said the redeeming purpose, of which He was the very life, had been with God from the beginning of time. All things were created through Him and unto Him. He was before all ; and in Him all things continued to be (Col. i. 16, 17). The Word which was in the beginning with God had become flesh (John i. 13). He who was on an equality with God had taken the form of a servant, and had been made in the likeness of men (Phil. ii. 7). The truth and the life which

appeared in Jesus had been an essential part of all that had been. They said, too, that this must have been present with God not merely as thought but as life. The unique Jesus led to the conception of the eternal Christ, who was one with Him. Many speculations started from the thought of this union. It is enough for us at present to mark the fact, and to take it as one more testimony, and that the greatest, of the unspeakable character of the divine gift in Jesus. All Christian faith begins here in the apprehension of a gracious and unique fact, in the very centre of human history, in the person of Jesus. It is the task of the Christian mind and heart to realise the full significance of this fact ; and to receive and respond to the Gospel which it not only contains, but is. That is not the task of a life-time only ; it has been the task of successive generations of Christian souls. There has been in Jesus a perpetual fount of blessing and He constitutes a theme which is never exhausted.

Chapter V

CHRIST THE SAVIOUR

"We are necessarily led back to Christ, the well-spring from whom the full-flowing fountain of Divine Life gushes forth in all its purity; the Son of God and the Redeemer of men, He who could with Divine confidence present Himself as such to mankind, and call all men to come unto Him to satisfy the cravings of their higher nature, must have had within Himself the authority of an infallible consciousness."—NEANDER'S "Life of Christ," p. 5.

"The true miracle of nascent Christianity was the spirit of Jesus, strongly grafted into his disciples; the spirit of sweetness, of self-abnegation, of forgetfulness of the present; that unique pursuit of inward joys which kills ambition; that preference boldly given to childhood; those words . . . 'Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.'"—RENAN, "Hibbert Lectures," p. 159.

"Given the nature and spirit of Christ, and sorrow, unique, transcendent, was to Him a divine necessity. . . . "If we think how He knew the hearts of men—the secret griefs, the unuttered regrets, the pining miseries, the blighted hopes, the thwarted wishes, the corroding remorse that dwelt like ghastly spectres, or burned like devouring flames, in almost every human breast—and how that insertive sympathy would make Him feel all His own, can we fail to see that there must have been in Him, through the mere fact of His living here, a sorrow such as the collective sufferings of His time gathered into one soul would but poorly express?"

"Centuries before Augustine and Anselm speculated, the Cross had proved itself to be the power and wisdom of God; and their speculations were but attempts to find a theory that would explain the fact."—FAIRBAIRN, "Studies in the Life of Christ," pp. 247, 248, 312.

"God . . . gave his only-begotten Son . . . that the world should be saved through Him."—JOHN iii. 16, 17.

CHAPTER V

CHRIST THE SAVIOUR

THE man of Nazareth became the Saviour of the world. He did many wonderful works, but He never became a demi-god, and He died under eclipse, the shameful death of the Cross. His after-influence was entirely that of a moral redeemer. He saved from sin. He created a passion for redemption of all men everywhere ; of men of every race and every condition ; and this because His influence on the single soul, coming under His sway, was recreative to the very core. A Paul had a Gospel for the world, because he found there was One who, in the profoundest sense, could save Paul.

There is no question, according to the judgment of our faith, of our Master ever being superseded in His Saviourhood. Till human history reach its goal His influence will be supreme. His is not only the unique, but it is the everlasting Name.

1. *The World's Redeemer*

The man of Nazareth was and is the great dynamic of the world's redemption. Jesus Christ, the Lord, raises for us great speculative questions which are bound to be faced. He suggests the profoundest faith about both man and God ; and

we review all existence in the light of His appearance. But these points can wait, for the present, till we grasp the fact that through the holy life of Jesus, and His obedience unto death, was set on foot the complete saving of our race (Rom. v. 19). The fact, if it be a fact, is profound, and shows a higher order of power and life than we see in all the universe beside. The life-work of Jesus created the greatest epoch in the world's history. He changed the trend of life altogether and lifted it on to new levels. He created a new moral atmosphere. In the course of a generation or so, in many a city of the Roman world where licentiousness and depravity, in their gravest forms, ruled, a new spirit arose. It stemmed the tide of impurity; it saved men from their weariness and despair. It created new faith and hope—faith, indeed, of moral triumph and of the coming of a Kingdom of God among men. It rescued many from hopeless depravity and saved them as "brands from the burning." It created pure, sane, strong, generous characters, sweetened and ennobled by the graces of Christian charity, filled with a genuine love of others, and ready for any sacrifice to redeem. When the Christian movement had had time to tell, the character of life and its outlook had undergone a far-reaching change.[1] Life as a whole had assumed another aspect. The change was traced directly to the personal influence of

[1] *Cf.* "The First Christians," by Robert Veitch.

Jesus. The New Testament is witness that He was the Saviour. He wrought the change. Not only is this so, but now, after nearly nineteen centuries, when Christian civilisation has been largely realised in these Western lands, we find the personal influence of Jesus is still an ideal and progressive element amongst us. The life He lived, the spirit He was of, and His redeeming passion still point to higher morality and new civilisations.

2. *The Redeemer's Secret*

The secret of the Saviour's power is His influence on the individual soul. He, by His holy love, sways the inmost heart—sentiment, emotion, purpose, will. He is present still with every believing one, for saving to the uttermost. But it must not be overlooked, that He ranks as a world-power in moral and spiritual affairs. What had we been without Him? Who knows? But does it not seem that society would long ago have come to complete moral corruption? At least, in His own day, the inherent powers of men were far spent in sin. They needed some new dynamic. God might, 'tis true, have intervened in some other way. But could any other way have been completely effective? Speculation ceases before the fact. God's way, in such matter, must have been the true way. The fact is the Divine might of redemption appeared in Jesus. The individual soul has not proved helpless in the moral conflict, because Jesus, the Master of

moral conditions, has been the ruling element in his environment. This is evident: the intervention of the Lord Jesus was necessary for human redemption; and individual hope and achievement have been another thing, in the moral sphere, since He thus powerfully entered into the world's life.

3. *Redemption's Cost*

The change effected in the whole trend and atmosphere of human affairs, from the moral point of view, comes in through one soul and its influence on others. The world's conflict centred in the spiritual life of Jesus. Every great soul becomes the battle-ground of larger forces of good and evil. No point may be won in the grand campaign but the battle rages round some great leader. The evil powers cannot suffer him to win; nor the good suffer him to fail. Every point won or lost is won or lost by some soul. We wrestle, says the Apostle, against "principalities, powers, world-rulers of this darkness." Of this fact the greatest souls seem to have been most keenly conscious. This we know, that he who puts heart and strength into the work of redemption, more and more finds that the complete saving of a single soul means the saving of a world. The horizon of his task widens. The depth of the soul's need appears. Man is a social being, an essential part of his world. He must be saved in all his sympathies and ambitions. He

must be so saved that he enters on a progressive conquest of his world, or he again succumbs to it. Both the man and the whole of his environment must be radically redeemed. Meanwhile the power which would redeem him must count for more than all else in the influence with which he is surrounded.

By these things we understand something of, though we may not fully know, the vicarious burden the World's Redeemer bore. Redeeming a soul is a more than Herculean it is a Divine task. Our Lord entered deeply into man's lot, and sought his complete redemption. The change effected, on the broad scale, in the world's life, is one measure of the tremendous conflict of the single soul by whom it was wrought.

There is another poor measure of this spiritual dynamic, which yet is eloquent. It is found in the force of the redeeming passion created by the Lord's life and death. Think of the mighty power which lay behind the heroic endeavours, the almost superhuman suffering, and the sympathetic travail of the Apostle Paul! He, in his turn, received the impulse from the immediate followers of Jesus—his spirit was the spirit of Peter and all the Apostles of the faith. The mighty enthusiasm passed out into all the world of that day. It brought many of the sin-enslaved under its sway. It "endured all things" in the achievement of its purpose. It withstood and overcame the coldness of indifference, the bitter-

ness of hate, the haughtiness of contempt, the thraldom of evil habit, the hopeless despair which comes with corruption. It inspired new, buoyant, pure life. The stream of that influence travels down to our own day, and is still the greatest factor of the life of men. This force was created in one soul—the soul of Jesus. Who can know what it cost? As well speak of the cost of some elemental power of Nature, and even that would be but a poor symbol. But cost there was. Such things are not wrought without cost.

We understand the atoning sacrifice of Jesus best, or at least most intimately, when first we have known and felt something of our Master's sinlessness and holy love, and realise how perfectly He seemed to be at one with the Father-God, entering into all His holy and loving desires for men ; and how, again, He sympathised with brother-men, the weakest and the most wayward, as well as the noblest. Does not this two-sided perfect sympathy involve all atonement? He who could know these must have borne a burden love would not, could not, lay aside, a burden which involved love's most exquisite joy and satisfaction, and yet which brought travail none other could enter into. We see the great soul-tragedy but feebly pictured in the life. We see Jesus touched with the feeling of men's infirmities ; we see Him shepherding lost souls ; we see Him weeping over His loved city ; we enter with Him into the shadow of Gethsemane and the

deep darkness of Calvary ; but we are like those who watched Him when He was going up to Jerusalem, and then were with Him in the garden ; we stand outside a great dumb sorrow which is His alone. The tenderest and most loving of men is the most sorrow-laden. There was " no sorrow like unto His sorrow." Here is the very mystery of God. We are here at the centre of things. We should need the nature of Jesus to fully estimate His travail. We here wait, as before the other great revelations of infinitude, in simple reverence and adoration. He who gives himself thoroughly to save another from spiritual death is the only one who is within sight of this travail of Jesus. Truly at cost unspeakable to the purest and the noblest the world's redemption from sin is wrought.

4. *The Victory Won*

Here, in the soul of Jesus, eternal love and goodness was at death-grip with the sin of the world. Sin in the conflict was undone. It lost its dominance and its witchery. It was revealed in its bald repulsiveness when, in essence, it was seen to be the power which murdered innocence. But love was put to the full proof. Its ability to save a world which had no place for the Nazarene was challenged ; and its answer to the challenge was to make the very Cross the symbol of the power to save. The death of

Jesus, the world's darkest fact, became the source of new life and faith to men.

Here, however, was more than a passing event ; more, indeed, than an epoch-making event of the greatest influence. Jesus, in His great sacrifice of love, had brought to light the deepest resources of life. He had, in His own language, shown the Father. His love had been sustained by the eternal love, behind and within Him, as the Father dwelt in Him and He in the Father. He told of infinite power bent on a world's salvation. But evidently, in all the varieties of its operation, He was chief. It might express itself in many forms, but He was the key-word. Redemption's great deed was wrought by Him. In all its other achievements He would still rule. He could not be dethroned from that Lordship which by spiritual deed He had won. So, it is only accordant with the reason of the matter that faith holds He is still at the heart of the moral conflict. He is to exercise His Saviourhood till life's victory is won. Begin with the historic Jesus and we are bound to believe that with Him, as part and parcel of His being and activity, the Godhead was present in its very essence and power. Begin with the historic Jesus and we cannot believe that He could fail. He, of all, must live again unless all our life ends in smoke, and if he lives He must for ever be the person most interested in and sharing in the world's redemption. He remains, for all time,

the one who intervenes for the salvation of men and the coming of the Kingdom of God.

This Saviour is in loving travail for every man. None is outside His love. He enters into our every step of moral progress. He rejoices over our every victory. He is with us to snatch victory even from defeat. Sin may not be the victor, for He is with us. The power of His own strong, pure, loving life is alongside every soul that looks to Him. He is with everyone who consciously or unconsciously does His will. He stands by everyone who chooses the good, and who is ready, at all hazards, to be true to the good he knows. The strength of the faithful rests in part in the gathering power of the saints, seen and unseen ; but the absolute pledge of triumph is that Jesus is still with us. He is Prince and Saviour. He is the ruling power, to-day, in moral life, the surety of moral victory. The best of the followers of Jesus does not trust any inherent or acquired power, but the Christ that dwells in him, the Christ who is in the midst of His own to succour them. By the historic offering of Himself, the Christ gave pledges of eternal redemption, and wrought, for our human life, the Master-deed ; but the redemption is still to be fulfilled, and none but He is sufficient for us. He ever lives to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him.

Jesus is the pledge of full and complete redemption. He is the surety that the work shall not

fail. When we plead for Divine forgiveness it is in the light of this sure hope we are regarded. Forgiveness would be vain, we could not plead for it, unless it were but the way to real renewal of life and, finally, to complete holiness. In this sense the righteousness of the Lord is imputed to us. We are not regarded as by ourselves, but in the light of His union with us. He is the surety that forgiveness will not be spent on believing souls in vain. Then, by looking at our sin, in the light of our Lord's travailing love, we come to sorrow with His sorrow. Our repentance takes on depth and fulness ; our aspiration is enlarged. There are still depths of our need and heights of aspiration we do not reach unto. They are of the " groanings within " (Rom. viii. 23)—the things unrealised. We can only plead, for our soul's satisfaction before God, that the Master will speak for us. We wait our full redemption. But He is our pefect Intercessor. The prayers we cannot pray, He prays for us. The groanings unutterable He voices. Our prayers are complete in Him ; our promise of life is to be read in Him. Through Him we are reconciled to God ; the children find peace at the Father's feet.

Jesus is the Saviour of our souls, and the hope of our world.

Chapter VI

FAITH IN JESUS

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." —ACTS xvi. 31.

"Again, I repeat, that this assent is an affair of the heart rather than of the reason, of the feelings more than of the mere intelligence."—CALVIN.

"To comply with this invitation and receive the Kingdom as offered is to believe; faith needs no better definition; it consists in spiritual receptivity." "The Kingdom being . . . a kingdom of grace, in which God appears freely bestowing benefits, it is clear that receptivity is not only a suitable attitude but an indispensable one."—BRUCE, "The Kingdom of God," p. 95.

"He who, when goodness is impressively put before him, exhibits an instinctive loyalty to it, starts forward to take its side, trusts himself to it, such a man has faith, and the root of the matter is in such a man." "The first of all requirements made from the earliest Christians was faith, a loyal and free confidence in Christ." "In the Christian view faith is life to the soul."—"ECCE HOMO," pp. 63, 75, 78.

CHAPTER VI

FAITH IN JESUS

THE grace of God to us finds manifold expression. It is in all the ways of His Providence. It is in Nature's beauty and the world's harvests ; it is in the joy of our physical life, and in the keener delights of the exercise of our higher endowments ; it is in personal comfort, and the pleasures of companionship. The personal God ministers in all, and ministers, we are persuaded, ever for our good.

1. *The Chief Grace*

God's greatest grace to us is in the gift of hearts to be loved, of devoted souls to be trusted, and, chiefest here, is the gift of His Son. His greatest creation is personal character, fit to be trusted and loved like His own. God speaks to us most personally through noble personality. He loves persons, and lives in them. We are face to face with Him in His Son.

Whatever may be the forms of God's grace to us, we must not fail to see that the essential matter is that the personal God—the Father—makes approach to His child. Some there are who place Nature, interpreted as a mechanism, between God and the soul. They darken life with

a hard fatalism. They forget or despise personality. Others, forsooth, place a materialised religion between the soul and its God. They multiply priestly ceremonies and make them necessary to salvation. But the religion of Jesus is direct intercourse with the Father in Heaven. It is grace on the one hand, faith on the other—the grace of the Father, the faith of the child. Whatever the intermediary, this is the essential relation. Nothing in the intermediary must despiritualise or de-personalise the relation. It must but voice the personal union.

All God's ways are grace, or love in the active sense. His joy is in creating joy. Our well-being is His constant aim. As we know Him in Jesus, all He has and all He is is consecrated to the good of His children.

2. *Saving Faith*

Faith, in the Christian and saving sense, is all our obedient and trustful response to the grace of God. Faith in general may be of many kinds. In its broadest meaning it is the condition of one who is persuaded. But one may be persuaded about many things—that a fact is a fact ; that an argument is true ; that a person is genuine ; that a document is authentic ; that a Book is divine, or even infallible. All these persuasions represent different kinds of faith ; but they are, none of them, faith in the saving sense. You may be persuaded about great religious truths—that God

exists ; that He is love ; that Jesus Christ is God's Son, in such way that to Him you must ascribe Deity ; that His atonement is all-sufficient for man's redemption ; that the soul is immortal. These persuasions are parts of a religious faith on its theoretic or doctrinal side. But of the main item, we are told that the devils believe and tremble. Nevertheless they are and remain devils. Faith, in the true religious sense, is not of the head, but of the heart.

You need to be persuaded of many things before you can have saving faith. You need generally, as the writer to the Hebrews says, to believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him ; that He is, and that He is good. You need to be persuaded of His grace in Jesus Christ so that that fact counts to you for more than all else ; so that, indeed, you are assured that the very heart of God is revealed to you in the Saviour's redeeming love. You need to feel all that over-mastering influence of Christ as the realised ideal of your soul, so that before Him you can reverently bow, and say in sincerity : " My Lord and my God." Yet all these things you may be persuaded of, and in some large measure feel, and yet not have saving faith, because you resist their rightful influence.

Faith, then, is trust and obedience in all that wherein Divine goodness appeals to us. It is being persuaded by that. It is essentially an attitude of our moral being. It is the inward

response of the heart to what is worthy. It is reverence and love where the whole soul may go out in unimpeded fashion. It is evident that such faith bespeaks an inward truthfulness or fidelity, from which all forms of goodness may spring. It is the attitude of the soul, without which nothing is really and deeply good in deed or character. Faith, in this Christian sense, is manifestly dependent on its object. If One were not known who was fully worthy of such faith, the Christian scheme of redemption, and, indeed, any scheme, would fail. There can be no human goodness except by faith, dimly or clearly cherished, in the Goodness which underlies and permeates all life.

3. *The Supreme Object of Faith*

Jesus is the supreme revelation of Divine grace. He is, therefore, the supreme object of faith. In Him God's personal approach to men is the most commanding, persuasive, personal. He confirms every other message of grace. He repeats it with fuller meaning. Providence is richer, human love is dearer, in the light of Jesus. But He Himself is more than all that has preceded Him. He is love incarnate ; He is truth ; He is holiness ; He is ideal manhood. Here is One, at last, whom men can love, and, loving, grow ever nobler for their love. Here is One to whom in deepest heart we may respond and only find ourselves nearer God and goodness. He is worthy to be

Lord of the inmost life, to inspire and dominate our very soul. He comes to us with all the authority of One who knows life's secret; is Master of its difficulties; and is strong and victorious just where we are weak. He is perfect in goodness.

4. *The Special Note of Divine Grace*

This gift is God's grace; but this is not all. God gave Jesus to His redeeming work in the hour of the world's deepest need. Jesus gave Himself to that work, in the name of the Father who was ever with Him, and in love and fidelity to men. God's grace is told out especially in the Saviour's passion. The soul's well-being of another is to Jesus as His own life. His is the love which seeks another though oft repelled, and cares for him, though he cares nothing for himself. His is the love which could spend itself to save the vilest; which could love and bless His own murderer. His is the love which could cast itself away on the world, when it was proving its own worthlessness to any but a Jesus. God faces us with One who of His own pure love would save us from ourselves to the life of goodness and of eternal blessedness. The persuasions of God take on the warmth and tenderness and travail of the Saviour's passion.

Christian faith is faith in Jesus. It is not believing truths about Him so much as yielding

the heart's truest allegiance to His spiritual Lordship and trusting in His redeeming power.

Once more the supreme transaction is of person with person. It is the sinner and the Saviour at their love-tryst ; the sinner forgetting his sin, and the Saviour His long travail, in the joy of their mutual love. It is the Master Jesus, and His " slave " for love's sake, busy with that service of one another which never seems enough. It is the Lord of Love, and the heart He has won listening at His feet. It is deathless fidelity, answered by a fidelity that would be deathless if only it might. It is sacrifice divine, winning for itself the only response which is worthy of the name in human hearts, the response, namely, of consecrated life.

Response to Jesus' personal call, trust in His personal help and redeeming influence, is, as we see, veritable redemption. There is nothing to compare with it, in all the experiences of life. To live in faith is to enter on life anew. It is to come under the spell of the Master's power ; to be stimulated and inspired by His love ; to cherish the hope of life's perfecting, and of eternal blessedness. It is to believe in great and good things on earth, and greater and diviner things in Heaven.

Grace is like God's sun on high ; and faith is the flower upturned drinking in energy and the special forces which make for fragrance and beauty. Grace is God's face towards us ; faith is ours towards Him. Faith is the soul's awaken-

ing ; grace is the instreaming of light and life through every opening avenue of being. Christ is the life and the light of men—God's life humbled to service, made incarnate. Faith is the soul's utter willinghood before such goodness.

5. *Grace Eternal*

God's grace is like Himself, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He withdraws nothing of the expression of it. Jesus is eternal, unchanging in His love. He abides at the heart of the world's history. He is with every man in his life-struggle. He is enthroned, but enthroned amongst us, Lord of earth as well as heaven. The Christian faith is in no past redemption merely ; it is in the living Redeemer. Grace and faith seek and find full reciprocity to-day. Our Lord and Master is with us alway to the end of time and the consummation of life. He is our Guide "till the day is done," and then will be our Lord in glory.

6. *Conquering Faith*

Faith opens up immense prospects. The measure of our life is not ourselves, but Christ in us. It is a question simply as to what He can do with us. Life after His pattern and spirit becomes possible through His constant companionship. Hopes respecting our own moral character, which we should never have cherished but for His Saviourhood, we trust Him shall be fulfilled.

The Christian of To-day

Looking out on the first conquests of the world's life in Jesus' name, the Apostle John (1 John v. 4) said : " This is the power that hath mastered the world—our faith." New victories await our Lord through every consecrated life. Those who have the spirit of Christ are the salt of the earth and the light of men. Through Him, by faith, life in general is yet to be transformed ; and His loving spirit is to find embodiment in every relationship of man to man. By faith in Him, true Christian souls still look to and ardently long for the City of God ; and by faith they endure all hardship and suffering for His kingdom's sake. By faith in Him numbers, even in recent days, have joyfully suffered martyrdom. Myriads daily bear burdens which would otherwise be too heavy for them ; exhibit enduring patience ; love on for pure love's sake ; suffer and serve to weariness, but without counting it any loss—all gain indeed—and all for love of Him and by faith in Him. The world's true life to-day is lived by faith in Jesus.

By faith in Him life has been lifted to new levels since the early Christian days, and advancing civilisation is more and more dominated by His spirit. Though hoary wrong in many a form still lifts up its head, those who know Christ know the day is with Him, and with them in His name.

The Christian does not await a new society in which to begin the new life ; rather does the new society begin in him ; but as Christ more and more recasts our moral environment, and society

becomes increasingly Christian, so is hope in the new day of mankind quickened, and the larger, richer life, which is to be found in Christ, comes to view. The perfect life is realised where Christian manhood is stimulated by the atmosphere of a Christ-dominated social life, and the influence of Jesus is radiating from soul to soul. Life will bloom and bear fruit in new glories when the Christ-charged social life comes to the aid of individual faith.

By the grace of God, specially bestowed on the world in Jesus Christ, and by the faith which this grace awakens, wonders of redemption have been wrought, and still are wrought. Here, still, is "the power of God unto salvation"—the power which shall transform the earthly life until it answers to the heavenly.

Chapter VII

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S POWER

"He charged them . . . to wait for the promise of the Father. . . . Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence."—ACTS i. 4, 5.

"Men had by degrees to recognize the fact that a new character had appeared in the world, among men like themselves; a character in which gentleness, sweetness, and saintliness of demeanour were combined with enthusiasm and inflexible zeal; in which was a joy that blended inseparably with supreme self-devotion, and a conquering hope that no enmities could crush. It was an evangel in human life; a discovery of something transcendent in the spirit; a living revelation of forces supernal."—DR. STORR'S "Divine Origin of Christianity," p. 271.

"Their experience"—that of the disciples at Pentecost—"was no isolated event. It was repeated, not indeed in the same emblematic form, but with no less reality and effect, on every fresh accession to their ranks, and in every new community which the Apostles reached. So uniform was it that, until it supervened, men were not regarded as having entered into a full knowledge of Christ."—R. J. DRUMMOND'S "Apostolic Teaching and Christ's Teaching," p. 315.

CHAPTER VII

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S POWER

THE earliest Christians were witnesses of the unique character of Jesus Christ the Lord, and of His saving power. To them He was, undoubtedly, the Son of God, Lord of the inmost life, personal Saviour. None could compare with Him. The foremost of prophetic souls was unworthy to unloose His shoe's latchet. No saving personality, however filled with travailing love, had been able, as He, to enter into man's sinful lot, and work such mighty redemption. The secret of the Father was with Him. The Divine life, in Divine power, appeared in Him. He came from the very bosom of the Father to declare Him.

1. *The Two-fold Content of Christian Experience*

The first testimony of Christian experience was as to this absolutely unique character of God's gift in His Son. The testimony was emphatic and unanimous—the expression of a wondering gratitude. The early Christian mind was, however, just as emphatic on the second point of its experience, namely, that the power of redeeming love, so unique in Jesus, remained with them, in rich measure, when He had gone from them. They were not as He ; but the new power for saving men which was theirs, in this new era, they could only explain in two ways, both of which were to

them the actual reading of the facts. The first was that their Lord lived on among them, a co-operating personal power, in all their activities on behalf of the coming of God's Kingdom. The second was that their own life was raised to a higher energy, in many ways, enabling them to respond to the personal presence of their Lord. Both of these phases of experience were according to the Master's teaching, as He had foreshadowed what would happen, when, in bodily form, He was removed from them. He had taught that this would not mean any lessening of power in the life into which He had led them. Rather the opposite. It was expedient that He should go away. He would send the Comforter through whom they would come into possession of all that He—the Master—had had it in His heart to bestow, but for which, during His lifetime, they were not ready. The light could only break on many matters when death had come to Him ; for then only would the fulness of His sacrifice be known, and the meaning of His life be, in any large measure, realised. Though He was withdrawn from them, in outward presence, yet He had promised to be with them through all the days, until the great consummation of life in God's Kingdom was reached, and the purpose of the ages was fulfilled.

What now actually happened? An age of redemption was ushered in, the like of which the world had not known. Masses of men were reborn in the spirit of Jesus. Numbers were

lifted out of the depths of human depravity into the beauty and strength of Christian sainthood. They put on the gracious, loving, redeeming character of their Lord. They were, in their turn, mighty in saving influence with their fellows.

In short, that new, surprising, uplifting, renewing power, which had been so unique in Jesus, inspired them, and dwelt with them. The power which was so distinctly His was given to them, and they believed, without question, that it proceeded from Him.

But along with all that Jesus did for them, and all His co-operation with them, the early Christian witnesses were aware that their own powers were raised to a higher form of activity. At first, stunned by the death of Jesus, utterly dismayed by it ; then convinced that their Lord was risen and that His death was but the way, for Him, to victory ; all their quickened, energised manhood rose up to meet the gift of God in Him. They lived to live unto their risen, glorified Lord. They wonderingly waked to the fact that they could continue in the life into which He had introduced them. They could still dare to claim the world for Him. All was not over as they had deemed. Nay, the conquest of the world, in Christ's name, was put into their hands.

2. *The Gifts of the Church*

As they ventured out, following God's leading, they were, at every step, astonished at them-

selves, or, rather, at the grace of God which was upon them. The Spirit of God took simple-minded, weak, common men, and by what was done through them put to shame the wise, the strong, and the high-born. Among those who were fishermen, and the like, were found some who exhibited gifts of inspired leadership. A great movement of the highest moral and spiritual import was committed to those, who, touched by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, gathered to one another ; and felt themselves as, in themselves, mere babes facing the task of a world's redemption. The great moral miracle of history is that the early Christian communities did not utterly fail in this huge enterprise.

Some there are who seem to lose sight of this stupendous spiritual fact, because they cling to their theory of a special Apostolic inspiration, confined to official channels. But we miss the moral force of the inspiration itself if we forget its varied character, and how it had to work on natural powers which were certainly dull, at first, in their appreciation of the Master's teaching. In the first important steps of the Church's history the Apostles were certainly not infallible. The Church owed much to a Peter, but it also owed more than it could tell to a Paul, a Barnabas, and to Christians like Apollos and Priscilla and Aquila. Every power of every leader was but " for the perfecting of the *saints* unto the work of ministering." " One Spirit " inspired the " one body "

of believers. They were together a holy and a royal priesthood.

But look more closely at the fact. See that what was done was done through men of most varied endowment, character, training, and social position ; through some, it must be confessed, who had many elements of fanaticism in their make-up, as well as through some of the sanest and noblest souls the world has produced. See how men, craven in spirit, scattered abroad at their Master's death, became heroic witnesses. They became so bold as to start their propagandism in Jerusalem itself, where the opposition would be fiercest, where every fact could be challenged, and where they themselves would be despised. They charged home the crime of Jesus' death upon the Rulers of the Jewish nation. No wonder some of them afforded the first examples of Christian martyrdom, itself a phenomenon of a most unworldly kind. They were far from craven now. They challenged opposition. They would bear witness at all costs. Martyrdom of the Christian type has ever been something more than brave submission to duty ; it has been a joyous, even exultant, witnessing, and a victorious defiance of death. Death has been welcomed if the witnessing might thereby be the more unmistakable.

But turn to another point ! The universalism of the Gospel of Jesus was almost buried in the first generation. The leaders of the Church could not escape the narrowing influence of their Judaism.

They knew they had received a new and more spiritual Gospel ; they knew that theirs was a Messiah who was such because He was Lord of the inner life ; but they themselves were Jews. They had come at Christianity through their Jewish training. They scarcely questioned that others must do the same. The early Church came upon the marvellous fact, quite as a discovery, first at Antioch in Syria, and then through Paul's missionary journeys, that the Gentile as Gentile could come under the transforming influence of the Spirit of Christ, and enter fully into Christian life. The Græco-Roman who was free, pleasure-loving, licentious to cruelty, as well as the Jew who was austere, ascetic, punctilious ; the one who had been accustomed to deify every passion and form of beauty and strength, as well as he who believed in the One moral Governor of the world, could come directly under the sway of the world's Spiritual Redeemer. That the Church in this matter did not miss its way can only be attributed to the inspiration, first, of those who did not belong to the Apostolic band. The raising up of one like the Apostle Paul, his call to the work, his gifts for it, his guidance in it, is a pre-eminent example of what the early Church experienced in the gift of the Spirit.

But look again ! By the power of the Spirit men of the vilest character became saints. The impure who had wasted their powers beyond the capacity to resist evil, the slavishly superstitious,

the passion-tossed, and those for whom habits of covetousness and extortion had become second nature—these repented, and, then, did not struggle hopelessly on, but became empowered for a new life of holy love and truthfulness and purity. This power came to wise and ignorant ; to enfranchised citizen and slave ; to the most lost, and to devout men ; and it came to all as a life new, Christ-like, loftier than anything they had ever dreamed possible. It was a heavenly wonder that out of such material Christ-like character was formed.

There were novel gifts in the early Church, gifts of the ecstatic soul—the seeing of visions ; gifts of prophetic insight, and understanding of God's ways and will ; gifts of healing, and of exceptional power in prayer ; but the crowning gift was the gift of co-operation—the gift of a common life, the gift of love, the gift which, in its practical form, became a readiness to count nothing of wealth or talent one's own. Ay ! A marvel indeed it was to make of such varied elements—of Greek and Jew, of the cultured and the uncultured, of the bond and free, of people of such varied tradition and temperament—one co-operative, loving brotherhood, with vital interest in the real well-being of each member, cherishing one great hope, sustained by one conquering faith, characterised by enthusiastic obedience to one Lord—and He a crucified Jew.

3. *The New Life*

The life which was born in each Christian and cherished as his own was a life of infinite promise. Character ripened, but the full promised good was not yet. Christian souls were conscious of deep strivings as of the Divine Spirit within them, which awaited a yet fuller life. The very striving was an "earnest" of what was to come. They had hints of blessedness beyond imagination. They saw grander heights of moral beauty in their Master. They learned more tenderly and trustfully to call on God as Father.

And one thing more: The saved were impelled to be saviours, and they were wondrously blessed in their mission. Christian experience was a gladness which must be heralded. The Christian, without the redeeming passion of the Christ, was something as yet unknown. Redemption was the business of life. That love of men, which was born of Jesus' love, made the salvation of any and every man the Christian's aim. A new love of the outcast arose, and the Christian spirit broke down every barrier of class, sect, or nation. The Church, newly won from the world, became the great instrument of a redeeming movement which went the round of the Roman world, and, presently, elevated the standard of the common life.

All this, let us repeat it, the Christian mind

interpreted as due to the gift of God in Christ, to the Master's own continued personal presence among His disciples, and His personal indwelling and co-operation with them ; but as due also to the raising of all the natural powers of perception and reception, by the Holy Spirit, of every soul that did not quench that Spirit's pleadings and influence.

4. *The Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit was thought of as Spirit of our spirit, the power which inwardly had formed the spirit of man from the beginning of history. Jesus Himself, while He prayed at His baptism, received the Holy Spirit in some new degree or form as the spirit of gentle, brooding love. By the Spirit He was borne into the temptation in which He won such moral victory. By the Spirit He was said to cast out devils. The Spirit of God was the formative power in the lower creation, but He came specially to His own in man, and there specially in man's higher life. The Holy Spirit was not new at Pentecost, but His full day had then come, in the sense that at last had dawned, through the revelation in Christ, the possibility of human life being lived with the fulness of its powers let loose. The Holy Spirit had been recognised in all the growing enrichment of the human mind and character in pre-Christian times, and especially in the inspiration of the prophets. Jesus had promised a great new baptism of the

Spirit in cleansing, enlightening, guiding, and empowering influence. He sent forth the Spirit in this new and mightier form, in the sense that His life and death prepared the way for it, and challenged the souls of those whom He touched to new activities.

What this new outpouring of the Spirit brought we have, in general outline, seen. It was a great outburst of the moral life. It was at last the realisation of sonship to God ; of a life lived in filial obedience and in the free spontaneousness of love. It led to an apprehension of the sacredness of human life in all its interests—life was God-given ; it was FOR God ; it was God-indwelt. It led to a great expansion of powers, and specially on the part of the common man. It spoke of still larger power and achievement to come. It brought refinement and strength of character. It produced abounding hope, and, greatest of all, it shed abroad in the hearts of men a love like God's love.

The office of the Holy Spirit may, in one word, be described as securing that Christ be formed in us. He interprets to us Christ. He enables us more and more to apprehend the Christ of history as our own personal Saviour. All Christ is to us, the Spirit enables us to respond to. He is ever enlarging both the power of perception of the beauty of our Lord, and the power of taking in all our Lord would give. He opens up our nature to the ever greater incoming and indwelling

of Christ, till our life become Christ's, our mind Christ's, our will Christ's, our disposition and feeling Christ's, and with open face we reflect as a mirror the glory of our Lord, and so are transformed more and more into His image, passing from glory to glory.

Chapter VIII

THE CHRISTIAN'S GOD

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." —2 COR. xiii. 14.

"The Evangelists conceive Jesus to be supernatural, and they attribute to Him miraculous acts; yet, with an undesigned discrimination, more sure than the most highly educated sense, they observe distinctions and limits which leave Him the most natural of beings, and cause His most extraordinary actions to appear normal." "Supernatural potencies which move within Jesus leave Him neither an extra-, nor contra-, nor preter-natural person, but a person to Himself and for Himself, strictly and surely natural, with powers which are to be understood and used as means to ethical and altruistic ends."—FAIRBAIRN'S "Philosophy of Religion," pp. 331, 341.

"Evangelical faith itself presents a trinitarian problem. . . . But the syntheses of the Trinity, attempted by the Fathers of the fourth century, halted at mere physical and logical forms, and cannot, therefore, suffice for the needs of evangelical faith, which is essentially an ethical matter. . . . It is . . . to be hailed as a very hopeful feature in the theology of the present day that its attention is directed more definitely than ever to the apprehension of the *ethical Essence* of God."—DORNER'S "Christian Doctrine," vol. i. p. 419.

"Neither is love a blossom of the other attributes, physical and logical; the highest is not the product of the lower, but—and this is the teleological aspect of the matter—*everything exists in God for love.*"—DORNER'S "Christian Doctrine," vol. i. p. 456.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHRISTIAN'S GOD

THE early Christian benediction we have quoted forms a fitting close to a noble letter from an Apostle to those whom he loved in the faith. It is here, probably, the spontaneous expression of the Apostle's spirit—hot from his own anvil. The closing benediction of his epistles have been growing richer, fuller. Here we reach one in which the blessing of the triune God is sought for those to whom the letter is addressed. The benediction incidentally conveys the rich conception of God which the Christian mind of the early days cherished, and to the unfolding of which the best minds of subsequent generations addressed themselves.

We venture on the most theological of theological topics, when we would re-state in simple form the Christian conception of God. It has been usual, for many years now, to decry theology and discussion of doctrinal matters. That position may be understood, if not assented to. Earlier generations had exalted orthodox opinion, until it took a supreme place in religion. Christian experience had become secondary. But in the rebound from that position, Christian people have

gone to foolish extremes in their dislike of serious thinking on the great themes of the faith.

In this matter, the study of Nature offers fair warning, and the nobler incentive. There was a day when it was felt to be a kind of presumption to endeavour to understand the mysteries of life. We suffered in a thousand ways for our continued ignorance. Diseases decimated the population. To-day, on the other hand, the marvels of life-history open out to us, creating an ever-increasing wonder ; and we press on to a comparative mastery of disease, in preventive and remedial measures.

Similarly, until we dare, as our fathers did, to think deeply on the great experiences of the higher life, we shall suffer the lack of faith and hope, sufficient even for daily uses. The presumption should be that what God has revealed He meant to be understood in some large and satisfying degree.

1. *The Rise of the Christian Conception of God —the New Facts*

Now, the Christian idea of God presupposes a faith in Him as the one Creator and upholder of all things, and as the Providence which overrules all in man's history for good. The Hebrew religion, out of the bosom of which the Christian sprang, had come thus far.

The Christian conception of God did not arise from pure speculation. It was not the creation of philosophic minds. It came to men in sub-

stance if not in form, through new and rich experiences. New facts of an unprecedented kind demanded to be first appreciated and then construed. The old bottles proved incapable of holding the new wine.

What these facts were is well known. The first was the coming of Jesus Christ. He was unique in His sinless character ; in the relationship He held to the Father in Heaven ; and in His saving influence on the souls of men. He was God's *unspeakable* — transcendent — gift. His was the name above every name ; and the name stood for His character and redeeming power. Those whom He chiefly influenced came to regard Him as the fulfilment of all human hopes and ideals. He was their "Christ." He became, indeed, Lord of their inmost life. They found in Him the bringer-in of God's new creation, that Divine spiritual power which should transform life and lead mankind to its goal. Jesus was a great new fact in the world's history. Creation and life presented entirely new aspects when He was set in the midst.

Christian thought took fresh start, again, from the elevation of personal powers which came to those who responded to God's call in Christ the Lord ; and who, together, accepted the responsibility of witnessing to Him in the world. Wonders were wrought in them and through them. Those who had been enslaved by weaknesses of the flesh were empowered for new and holier life ;

those who had been dull to all spiritual vision were given insight into the riches of the gift of God in His Son Jesus Christ, and into all the prospect which this opened up ; those who were redeemed were given wonderful power of persuasion and holy influence with others. All this they understood in no other way than as a fuller co-operation of the Spirit of God with them, deigning to bless and use them. Here, again, was a great new fact in the world's history. There had been nothing like this wonderful uplift of human life. As in creation's hour, the Spirit of God moved on the mass of formless matter, bringing forth order and beauty, so the Spirit came upon chaotic human life, fashioning a new order of manhood, possessed of a new consciousness of life's possibilities.

2. *The New Facts demand Explanation*

Once these facts came to be appreciated they demanded to be construed. They must be understood. God, creation, and history must be read in their light. How was this done? The exceptional—the unique—personality of Jesus could only be interpreted as an incarnation of God. No other explanation was adequate. Yet the humanity of Jesus was real. His human personality was no mere appearance. There was, therefore, a descent into this human form, and a union with it, of the Divine Nature. He was the " express image of God "—the full ideal expression of God's inner nature and life. There was, in Him, that which

anticipated the creative process. He was the ideal towards which the creation moved. In Him was bodied forth the purpose which had been hidden in creation and life from the beginning. He was already, though appearing right in the midst of the course of development, the sum and perfection of life. In Him perfect sonship to God was manifest. Reflecting on what He was, and on things which He had said of Himself, Christian souls saw in Him "the only-begotten Son of God." What was meant by that was that He had come by no creative process. He was the direct expression of the Father's nature from eternity. Before the world was, He was with God. As the outcome of God's love, and the object in eternity of that love, He was perfect as the Father was perfect.

The creation, again, was another expression of God's inmost nature. Here, in the cosmic process, was another descent of God, like that of the one-begetting and incarnation of the Son. The world was created in the image of the Son. It is finally to be summed up in Him. We see a depth, in this truth, earlier generations could not see. Nature's goal is man, and man's goal is Christ. The cosmic process is one. Matter carries the promise of life ; and life natural carries the promise of life spiritual. As Paul already expressed it, in his wonderful philosophy, the material creation awaited, as with strained expectation, the coming of the sons of God. In crea-

tion itself there was a larger purpose embodied—a groaning and a travailing for the freedom of God's sons, as though only in man and his perfection would Nature's mission be realised. In the spirit of man, again, the deeper Spirit—the Spirit of God—was in travail for the full redemption of the natural into the higher, spiritual, morally perfect life. The final goal of this movement, through Nature to spiritual perfection, was the same as was expressed in Christ. Nature in its deeper significance, was Divine. The ideal Spirit had been present in creation from the beginning. From eternity, indeed, this Spirit had proceeded from the Father and the Son. The Eternal Love had its joy in outflow of creative activity, and in bringing other sons unto glory. These things were all rooted in the essential nature and being of God. It was impossible to think of a time when they were not.

3. *The Trinitarian Interpretation alone suffices*

The question is easily raised, Why not interpret the facts in other and, as some would say, simpler ways, whilst admitting their sublimity? It may at once be said that almost all conceivable objections have been raised in earlier days, and that none but the Trinitarian conception of God approaches to satisfaction of heart and mind. Our thought must do reverence to the verdict of Christian consciousness, in all generations, as to the Divine perfection in Christ the Lord. It must

also do justice to creation, including human personality and history, read in the light of God's eternal purpose. Nothing suffices which does not interpret these. We see God twice "cast away on His own world"; yet it has never been let out of His hand. In the language of philosophy, here is a two-fold immanence and transcendence. In the incarnate Son, and in creation ideally interpreted, there is the expression of God's essential nature, and its full embodiment. Deny this, and we must ascribe only a limited perfection to Nature and the Eternal Son. By a superficial reading, we may think it easy to do the first; but deny perfection in the Son, and we must, sooner or later, find we have robbed the Gospel of its ideal element, and so far belittled all our human hopes.

If we should try to relieve ourselves of difficulty by conceiving of the manhood of Jesus as assumed only, for a time, by the Son of God—a mere passing appearance; or, on the other hand, should we conceive of Jesus' Divinity as but the sublimest form of created manhood, we know we minimise the facts to make them square with our theory. In the first case, an assumed manhood discards the real union of Divine and human in Christ and eviscerates the Gospel. In the second case there is no justice done to our sense of the infinite distance between the perfection of Jesus and the imperfect nature of other men.

If, again, we think to treat the Son and Spirit

as simply forms of revelation of the one Person—the Father-God—we are brought to a stand by the apparent self-limitation of the Godhead, first in the perfect union of Divine and human in Jesus, and then in the fulness of God's embodiment of Himself in creation and its ideal movement. In a real, full, true incarnation, and in a creative process with divinest issues, God seems to abdicate His throne and the government of the universe. Put in the simplest form, the Christian mind does not feel that it has done justice to the revelation of God in Son and Spirit unless all of God, and God in His perfection, is found immersed in both ; yet God is above as well as in His universe.

We have, in the briefest way, touched on the Christian philosophy of this great question, but the practical matter for Christian life is that it is only this Trinitarian — this, as we believe, fully Christian—view of God which saves us from the errors of deism on the one hand and of pantheism on the other. The failure of Unitarian or deistic forms of religion to quicken spiritual life after the manner of the evangelical faith is due to their God being largely conceived as transcendent only. He is enthroned in His heaven afar. He cannot thoroughly give Himself to the world He would save. He cannot in the deep and intimate sense share our lot. He cannot lose Himself in our life even to accomplish His redeeming purpose. He is reserved in His holiness ; or

His sympathy cannot express itself in any self-abandoning away, and becomes a distant sentimentality. The necessities of the evangelical view are the inner necessities of love. The noblest life must lay itself down in love's mission, and yet rule for love's ends. WE can do this—at last JESUS could do this—because at the moment of sacrifice there was another in whom trust could be placed. By the non-evangelical, God is, indeed, spoken of tenderly as the Father-God, as a loving Providence, as the Forgiving One ; but He is not presented as One who gives His only-begotten Son, His other self, for a world's redemption. The atonement is not emphasised, in any sense. God is regarded as too serene. He is not in travail for man's salvation. It is just these truths which are the starting-point of evangelical fervour, and which give to Evangelicalism its great power as a redeeming force. Its God comes into close touch with human life with all its sin and sorrow. He takes all its burden on Himself ; loses Himself, indeed, in the saving of men. It needs the evangelical form of thought to express at all adequately the love we find revealed in Jesus ; for that love is a love which makes sacrifice of itself—gives itself away—in the work of redemption.

Similarly, if we do not tenaciously hold to the Trinitarian view of God, we are in grave danger of losing God in His world, by the very attempt to bring Him near to creation and life, and

to overcome the error to which we have just been referring. The pantheist, instead of finding God in the overruling purpose which discovers itself in the world and human history—in the Spirit which broods on creation—makes God and His world the same thing. Everything good and bad is the expression of God's mind. Evil is but another form of good. If God is all, and everything is but a form of God's thought and will, then we cannot be other than we are, and all the dangers of necessitarian doctrine are with us. Personal responsibility is gone. In explaining away sin, we have explained away goodness, and shorn man of his glory, and history of all nobler meaning.

4. *Our Reserve*

In advancing what is here presented we do so, even in this late day of Christian thought and history, with all the reserve which befits the greatness, the overwhelming character of the theme. We may well remember the words of Fénelon: "Need we wonder if the infinite exceeds our weak narrow minds? Would you measure God and His mysteries by your vision? Would He be infinite if you could measure Him and fathom His depths?" When we begin to interpret and pass beyond what lies in the actual revelation, however necessary may seem the steps of reasoning, we must tread with some hesitancy.

But what God has expressed of Himself in

Nature, in the human soul, in history, and in the Christ, is expressed that all men may "see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God." Some sufficient and satisfying knowledge on our part is intended. Reason is not given in order to be baffled and thwarted. We are led onward, too, by the Master's own thought, and by the thought of those who came most directly under His inspiration, as well as by the leading Christian minds of later days.

The Christian revelation presents God to us not only as Author and Sustainer of all things, but as Father of mankind, whose nature is love. Before the world was, the Son was begotten who was the full expression of His own nature. From eternity the love of God had its outgoings towards Him who was as the Father's own life. The joy of this Divine fellowship could not but multiply itself. The creative purpose is in the very nature of God. A kingdom of perfected souls, worthy of Himself, is no after-thought. The Divine Spirit proceeds from the inner and eternal love of God. Involved in the creative process, the Holy Spirit is from the beginning making the creation answer, more fully at each step, to the Divine thought, until man in his freedom arises. He who is the ideal of creation, and in union with whom it is finally to find its goal—the Son of God—through the eternal Spirit becomes incarnate (Heb. ix. 14), makes sacrifice of Himself, and passes through the valley of humiliation for our sake (Phil. ii. 8).

The new day of the Spirit was come so soon as the revelation and sacrifice of Christ were fulfilled; and men came to know the love which passeth knowledge. His work will complete itself when Christ is formed in us, and the holy society of the redeemed shall fully answer to the mind of Christ. He quickens in us the response of faith, and enables us to receive the indwelling Christ. He fulfils in us what, through all history, He has been doing for the world. He enables us to conform to the mind and will of Christ. The world's life is at every step the union of this inner and upper life — the life of the Spirit and the Son.

However conscious we are that there is much we do not know, yet along these lines we are clear that our God has revealed Himself and would be understood by us. He who is unapproachable in His majesty and His holiness is near to us in His love. He rules in life; we are ever in His hand. Yet He makes sacrifice of Himself. Through His Son He entered on life's struggle and made victory secure. Through the Spirit, He is spirit of our spirit; in us and with us in every aspiration and striving. He reigns supreme, but He is all in all for us. All He has and all He is He spends on His children. The Christian conception of God is a conception of Eternal Personal Love, realising itself, for very joy of love, in a kingdom of souls. The simple but all-comprehensive statement is: "God is Love."

BOOK III

THE CHRISTIAN'S OUTLOOK ON THE WORLD AND LIFE

CHAPTER IX

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF PROVIDENCE OR OF THE WORLD

"We know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to His purpose." —ROM. viii. 28.

"We believe that God is in His own world, and that He governs it by His personal will; that this government includes nations, families, and individuals; that it aims at the highest good and the everlasting good of sentient and intelligent creatures; that it is one which admits the action of our mind upon God's, and the action of God's upon ours; that it has in it a place for all human yearnings and strivings and longings." —H. W. BEECHER'S "Biography," p. 326.

"The calm faith in good as the beginning and end of all, and in a Father in Heaven realising His Kingdom on earth, with which Jesus Christ faced the world, is the high-water mark of religious intuition."—E. CAIRD, "Evolution of Religion," vol. ii. p. 275.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF PROVIDENCE OR OF THE WORLD

WE have seen that the Christian religion is rooted in natural religion. Religious language —both thought and word—required time to grow. The Christian religion, coming in at an advanced stage, uses, in all its deeper interpretations of man and God, the thought and gathered feeling already stored by men. We have further found that the Christian religion is one of the higher religions of the world, which take their readings of God not so much from the material creation, as from human life. God has revealed Himself, according to these, in the secret of the human soul ; in the accumulated results of inspiration ; and in the trend of human history. The truth of the soul has been tried in the crucible of life. Among the religions which have this emphasis the Christian religion, we have seen, has no peer. It presents to us its own great unique facts—the personality of Jesus ; and the continuance, among those who have yielded to His sway, of a strong redemptive power akin to His own. In the midst of Nature stands man ; and, from the Christian point of view, man with the promise and potency

of redemption upon him. This new illumination casts light back on all the older elements of religious faith ; brings out their truer significance, and gilds them with a new glory. So, for example, is it with the faith in Providence. The Christian faith is here richer, fuller far than any other to be found in the world.

1. *There is, undoubtedly, a Natural Faith in Providence, though it may be seriously blighted sooner or later*

The faith is natural to the child. If only he have some loving tending, he need not be reared amid conditions of luxury to take up, quite as his own, the language of trust in some over-ruling Power, whether it be in a Heavenly Father's care, or some dimmer form of the same faith. Especially is this so, if eye and ear are surrounded by Nature's sights and sounds. The stars of heaven and the flowers of earth make faith, in an all-seeing kindly Providence, natural to the child-mind. The impoverishment of the slum-reared child, which is most serious, is the impoverishment he suffers in this natural faith. 'Tis true the hard facts of life soon disturb the idyllic trustfulness we have been here presenting.

The favoured child-races of the world have created a literature full of the stories of genial divinities of hill and valley, wood and stream. Those who lived amid the sunny isles of Greece

have given us the god Apollo and all his train. Life rang with laughter, and faith was easy and natural, in Homeric days. Later, in the time of Sophocles, the intricacies of existence have become perplexing, and the warp of life seems mysteriously threaded through and through by a darksome fate—a fate in which both gods and men are involved.

The poetic gift is the gift of Nature's cultured child. It is the power to look out on the world with fresh, unsullied vision, and quick, interpretive insight, and read again in Nature's great book. Wordsworth says :—

"There was a time, when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream."

As manhood advanced things took on, for him, a more sombre hue. The glory passed from the earth. The poet was, however, recalled from a grief and melancholy which he felt wronged the season—the glorious Spring—and he says :—

"I hear the Echoes through the mountain throng,
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay ;
Land and Sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every Beast keep holiday."

Still the more serious phases of life would recur, and our poet says :—

> "I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts."

2. *The Modern Mind has lost any spontaneous Faith in Providence*

The serious thinker is cast into very great perplexity. He recovers himself only after strenuous battling with the problem. Sometimes he questions himself as to whether faith of any vital kind remains among men, or whether religion is not undermined at the very foundation. Is there anything but a tradition of a faith which is spent? There is, no doubt, some general belief in God, but is it in a God who has any hand at all in life and history? Men have witnessed physical disaster—famine and pestilence, disease and premature death, convulsions of Nature like earthquake and typhoon and volcanic eruption. They cannot any longer attribute these things, as did the ancients, to the gods of darkness, or to momentary anger of the kindlier deity. They have to find room for them within the scheme of a beneficent providence. And it is difficult.

The study of physical science and the discovery

of law everywhere has produced the sense that we are in the grip of a great system of material forces, absolute in their sphere, and amid which mercy is unmeaning.

Providence, if Providence there be, is in a parlous position with us. If evil is permitted to go long lengths, we think there is no restraining, guiding hand. Rampant wrong rides on unheeding ; no God to fear. If evil produces its natural crop of self-destroying corruption, then life is counted pitiless ! There is no God to redeem.

But most serious of all is the defeat of good souls. The problem of Job is still in large part with us. Some of earth's best die dishonoured. Human history, it would seem, should issue in something good, for the path is strewn with martyrdoms ; but, then, is there not something sinister there, foreboding ill, in that the martyrdoms were permitted? The Cross of our Lord, at such a point, is the most formidable of facts. It is the sign of evil's triumph, however short-lived the triumph may prove. The Good One is done to death ; and that, with every token of infamy, and exaggeration of cruelty. The Son of God is trodden under foot of rampant wickedness.

Ah, yes ! Here are things no more than touched upon, which we had better admit, and admit to the full. They are more, by far, than we can explain. No trifling defence is of any avail. Unless some great fact or facts shall count for

more than all that has been suggested, we are silenced. We could offer, in reply, many things which would temper the fierceness of judgment; but, unless some mighty hope be ours that good must be "the final goal of ill," the moderation of doubt is vain.

3. *The Contribution of the Christian Religion is, here, of supreme value*

It confronts us not so much with argument as with fact—that kind of fact which counts for more than all else—the fact, namely, of Jesus, and the redemption which has proceeded from Him. Those who have appreciated the significance of this, in the world's history, are filled with an unconquerable hope that life cannot be vain. The Christian religion saves us from losing our balance amidst crashing disasters. It recalls us constantly to look on life in the proper perspective. It does not suffer us to be overwhelmed by the calamity of the moment, or to be plunged in perplexity by the vastness of life's issues. We are not filled with dismay because confronted with problems too great for our rational powers.

4. *Science and Popular Philosophy are apt not to see the wood for the trees*

Whatever may be said about Nature, "red in tooth and claw with ravin," or of her cataclysms, and the toll she takes of mankind in many ways, she has yet been the scene of human his-

tory. Man has found room here for his development, and that has included a progressive moral life. Nature, so far as her forces have contributed, may be said to have nurtured these higher issues. Nature has not proved unkindly. Occasionally she may seem to be a rough foster-mother, but she has reared a race of stalwart sons.

When Christianity would judge of the world as a sphere of Divine Providence it concentrates attention on these things. The world, as material, is entirely subordinate in interest. The creation was for man, as son of God. It was a sphere merely—though a wonderful sphere—for the rearing of personal character. So far as it goes, natural science says the same thing. Man is the crown of Nature's development. From lowest forms to highest, life has been making for this goal. Nature, then, whether favouring it or provoking it by opposition, has yet been the scene of human progress.

Now, look on the achievements of mankind, and gain some estimate of human worth. Mark the growing mastery of material forces, the creation of the sciences and arts—music, sculpture, painting—the cultivation of religious thought, the enrichment of personality, the temples and systems which have expressed dimly or clearly the sense of contact with higher and then with holier powers, the development of civic well-being—cities and states—and all that complex result we call civilisation. As generation succeeds to generation, may

all this pass into smoke? Is it the "baseless fabric of a vision" which shall leave not a "wrack behind"? Or, if that be too much for unbelief, are successive generations of mortals to perish only that at last some final immortal race be produced?

Whilst we contemplate that question history confronts us with one great fact, and the fact will not yield ground for all our theorizings. The fact is Jesus, Man of Nazareth, Son of God, the Saviour of the world. Describe Him as we will, He is a supreme personality. Is He only *means to an end?* Was He born to die? The mind of man revolts, and will more and more revolt, against any such conclusion.

But think of man and his destiny and you must connote Jesus, for two very good reasons. He was man; shows, therefore, by what He was, what can be done with manhood. He suggests the possible greatness of the individual soul. Lengthy vistas open there. But, again, touched by the influence of Jesus, myriads of souls have put on new, Christlike character, and to the prospects of such life there is no end. This life which our Lord has actually called forth in His saints, from the least to the greatest of those inspired by His Spirit, is too good to lose, if existence is to have any meaning at all. It points, rather, to an everlasting kingdom of the redeemed into which all good shall be gathered.

When Christianity faces the wide issues raised

by questions as to an over-ruling Divine Providence, it sets man, with all his revealed worth, in the midst of Nature ; and in the midst of history it sets Christ the revealing and recreating Light of it all. All things are thus seen to bear the stamp of this Christ-destiny.

5. *The Christian View of the World and Life casts a new light on all the course of Providence in history*

The Apostle Paul, as Professor Findlay says, was the first to propound a philosophy of history. That is no accident. The Christian saint and philosopher but sets forth the first implications of the faith. The sufferings of life ! — they are nothing in comparison with the issue to which they lead. They are a part of the travail towards things greater. Nature awaits, as with expectant gaze, the coming of man to his full freedom, for then, by all her higher uses, she will share in manhood's glory. The sighings of the human spirit, its holy discontents, its strivings, point to a perfection of life in which all its powers at last shall find their full, free, harmonious expression. There are, indeed, unutterable longings, of which we are partly conscious, groanings, as we believe, of the Divine Spirit, in and with our own, which point away still further to an eternal and all-comprehensive Good, such as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man." Nature is to be interpreted as leading to this great goal. The

discipline of life is to be estimated in the light of its contribution to this noble end. In view of the great Christian facts, the hope of a permanent, indestructible good is unconquerable. The life in which Jesus has shared, the life which has shown such response to His redeeming Spirit, cannot be vain or meaningless. Even now all things must, through the Providence which purposes such great things for us, be being over-ruled for good, whether this may be distinctly discerned or not.

6. *The Christian Revelation thus furnishes us with a great Faith*

It is a *faith;* it is not a perfect science of things, or a perfect philosophy which leaves nothing to be explained. It is not a mathematical demonstration. It divines—does not define—though it divines accurately. The world and life are full of unexplained mysteries ; but the faith of the Christian is not therefore blind. It is the faith which is inevitable in a world in which Jesus Christ is the supreme fact. Science and philosophy must yet clear up many a difficulty ; the issue, however, is certified beforehand. Reason cannot be satisfied with unsolved enigmas, but it may be shot with confident hope, illumined and guided by faith—faith strongly based on great moral facts.

The Christian faith rests in an all-sustaining, all-controlling, gracious Providence, vast as the forces of Nature, covering the races of men, per-

petuated through time — a Providence having supreme regard all the way to the personal interests of the individual and of mankind. The Christian looks out on the infinitely varied provision for the strength and joy of natural life, and still more on all the way in which the inner life of man has been nurtured, and trusts with a child-like confident trust that the moral interests of life are all safe. There can be no disaster or defeat. It is the office of Providence to secure that nothing shall over-power us in the life which is life indeed. The moral development of the world, amid all that is untoward, is, in the widest view, reassuring. We shall yet be afforded a place adequate for our life. God's great purposes for men cannot suffer defeat.

It is true that the ultimate proof of our position is only to be presented when the goal of our moral ideals is reached. "We have but faith, we cannot know." Only the sureties of faith are as great as the sureties of reason, or greater. The Christian depends upon a fact which he believes outweighs all other facts in its import; but a fact which, at the same time, stands forth as in noble accord with all the rest, the very life and soul of all. Life is summed, for the Christian, in Christ.

Chapter X

GOD IN THE SOUL—THE CHRISTIAN VIEW

"Lo, the kingdom of God is within you."—LUKE xvii. 21.

"The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God."—ROM. viii. 16.

"Fore-ordained to be conformed to the image of His Son."—ROM. viii. 29.

"Until Christ be formed in you."—GAL. iv. 19.

"If the highest thing in man is his sense of right and wrong, his longings and ideals, his aspirations after the Eternal and Infinite perfection, his belief in the permanence of the unseen things of faith and love, and in the continuance of the souls that cherish them, and if this has been developed in him in due course as he has advanced in understanding of his own nature and of the world in which he is placed, his religion cannot be explained away by the road he has travelled, but the road he has travelled is to be explained by his religion."—J. OMAN, "Vision and Authority," p. 11.

CHAPTER X

GOD IN THE SOUL—THE CHRISTIAN VIEW

WE have said, at an earlier stage, that the Christian religion is one of those higher religions which find God supremely in the soul. The Christian religion, indeed, in the fineness and depth of its perception of this relationship stands alone. Nature and life, it is true, bespeak God—His power and wisdom—but He stands pre-eminently revealed in the personal moral history of the individual and the race. Nature finds its climax in this personal history, its inner meaning is here unfolded. It is bereft of its glory and deep significance when separated from man. Personality is, indeed, its essential element. The interest of person in person is at the heart of it. It is a revelation of the Divine interest in human personality ; and the finest relation of person to person is its highest product, historically. The great Cause would seem to stand revealed in the personal soul.

The ancients saw God in the awe-inspiring forces of Nature—in the forces of light and the forces of darkness—before they discerned Him in anything of ordering wisdom. The conscious recognition of beauty in Nature was not very early. Those first seers looked out on the majesty

of earth and sky, and felt there something of the infinite Divine, before they dared to think that they themselves were, in any sense, indwelt by the Godhead. It is difficult even for the modern to believe that God dwells with the simple soul. He is found, perchance, with the saint in his vigil, or with the priest at the altar. But life of the common life? Ah! men make all kinds of reserves before they take that plunge of faith. It is easier far, apparently, to believe that God is present in some mysterious descent of Apostolic grace in the priestly line, or in the most childish of sacerdotal functions. God may be with the chosen official, whatever the character of his manhood, but not with man as man. There may be a certain divinity, forsooth, attaching to kings. That is all very pathetic when it is seen to be the other side of man's lack of faith in himself, or in God's presence with him. We have no wish to minimise or avoid the difficulties of this faith. The great faith has ever some difficulties to master; but the difficulties are but a phase of the greatness of the faith.

1. *Man has groped his Way out of the Twilight of ignorance and error*

He has come out of the dimmest twilight, by slow and blundering stages, into the light of truth, and into the assurance of the reality of God and goodness. Much is made of that. It has, indeed, been a strange discipline. Providence

seems to hazard a great deal. There must surely be something adequate in the venture. Life is strewn with much wreckage. What mistakes man has made before he has found, often by the multitude of them, the remaining way of truth! How barbaric cruelty, and even cruelty refined, has been emphasised by superstition. How long ignorance has been tolerated where knowledge might have taken its place! What an amount of sin and consequent misery has resulted from mere inertia —an unwillingness to think and take trouble! Yes! it is a tolerable tangle. God and man pay a great price for freedom; but then freedom is everything. And we must not so read the story as to discount man's faculty—the instinct which has scented the way—or the guidance which has made the result sure. We must not think of the personal soul as an accident, much less as a mischance. We must judge by the result, and not by the process.

2. *The Life of the Soul is all its own*

The mystery of its being lies in its shaping its own way. In the midst of a system of material forces that is iron-bound, the soul is free. All its results are self-achieved; its character is self-determined. All kinds of influences flow in upon the soul from Nature and from the personal Spirit of God, but the soul must receive them and use them in its own way. There is a sacred enclosure of its life which even God Himself has resolved

not to invade. His influence flows in, but He does not break through. In Holman Hunt's picture of "The Light of the World," the door at which the Royal Visitant waits opens from within. The latch is inside. The dignity and responsibility of self-activity, and of the shaping of its own way, belong to the soul by God's supreme will. This is personal freedom, the secret of personality. The fact of such freedom is as plain and as majestic as the ordered heavens. Read history in the light of this fact, and the marvel of man's development begins to appear. We stand in awe of the soul, but we begin to believe in it. The greatest creation is the creation of the soul.

3. *Truth and Life characterise the history of the Soul*

How strange it is, in view of some things already said, that the soul does not lose its distinctive character! Amidst all the error and all the sin, it may be said, broadly speaking, to pursue its way; not undeviatingly, but surely. There is something well-nigh indestructible in the character of the soul. Corruption may go great lengths without death and utter loss supervening. Life, in its inmost characteristics and deepest impulses, remains consistent with itself. The individual cannot easily sin away his powers. There is something deep within which revolts. The life of the race is strewn with resurrections. The

Divine Spirit guarantees that. The better life must not die.

Lift man just out of the grossest savagery and he begins to sing his saga, and weave legends about his heroes. He idealises life ; begins to dream dreams. He cannot but pay his tribute of admiration wherever the nobler thing appears, and he begins to immortalise it. This is true, even if, eating and drinking, he prefers to adorn his revelry, like many of a later day, with praise of a heroic past, rather than enter on the costly endeavour of making the present heroic.

But the race has, in all its highest reaches, for many many generations, got far beyond savagery. We show amazing ignorance if we dwell much upon man's poor beginnings. That is to do despite to history and its great issues. We have come some long distance on the road of development. We must remember man's glorious creations : his languages—every word a crystalline form of thought ; his poetry, subliming life and Nature ; his mythologies, embodying in story the mystic operations of Nature-powers ; his philosophies, with their high endeavour to read, as in one book, the thought of things ; his arts, imitative and creative—architecture, sculpture, painting, and music ; the sciences, with their growing mastery of material forces ; history, with its stride by centuries and its garnered heroism and political wisdom—its life-revelation. Are we still found prating about the twilight (!!!) of man's grop-

ing after knowledge? If we do not yet witness the blaze of noon-day, the sun is well into the heavens.

> "Day!
> Faster and more fast,
> O'er night's brim, day boils at last."

Man's achievements, too, are all his own. They have been attained by high endeavour, sustained by hope and courage.

And we have not yet named the greatest of them all. He has won to some high thought of life's origin and destiny in all his great religions. They all tell out his profound impression of the greatness of the soul, and of its dwelling-place. Here, too, no audible voice from heaven has taught him. If voice have spoken it has been in the silences of the soul and the breaking light of meditation. From man's religious faiths and hopes has, again, proceeded his high ordering of life —his moral systems and civilizations. Some of these have come and gone; but he has reared others. Old civilizations may be likened to buried cities. The new cities are raised upon their ancient ruins. This result of masterful hope, aspiration, and effort—this continuous march of progress—unfolds the inner nature of the soul. Here is unrolled its latent contents.

4. *The Rise of Christianity may be regarded as a new and glorious outburst of the human Spirit*

There are only two movements at all akin to it which are within the clear light of history.

The one is that heightening of every activity of the mind, which characterised the age of Pericles in Greece. The other is that fresh sense of the world's great burden, and new-born passion for the poor and suffering, which is represented by the rise of Buddhism.

The new birth of the Spirit, under the influence of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and in the deep awakening which followed this, showed altogether new possibilities in the human soul. Individuals rose into a life hitherto undreamed of. Masses of the population were carried up to higher levels of spiritual emotion, of moral feeling, and of noble purpose. The grace of God appeared to men. They gained glad glimpses of what God would do for them. It was as though the heavens opened. Many received assurances of the possibilities of Divine sonship. Like a new revelation it came to men that God was with them. What they might be in themselves—in character and life — began to shape itself quite differently. They counted not of themselves, as shut up to themselves. The one great thing about their personal life was that it stood open on all sides to the incoming of Divine inspiration—light and life, illumination and moral power. The soul's faculty supreme was its faculty for God ; it could receive God. That was the tender, awe-inspiring truth.

This sublime consciousness, too, was redeemed from all vagueness and vapouring. The new thing

was Christ—the perfection of manhood revealed in Him. In Him the human spirit came to fulness of bloom. Men loved the Christ and felt to the depth of their heart their kinship to Him. They were reborn in His Spirit. They looked away to the putting on of His character. They thought of a life at last in which they should be altogether His. The faculty of the human soul was, to speak definitely, the faculty for Christ-likeness.

All Christian history is but a witness to the depth and far-reachingness of this truth. Under the influence of Christ the soul has been putting on ever richer life, showing greater and greater capacity ; and of that development there is no end. Individuals who have put themselves to school with Christ have realised in their own way the beauties of Christian sainthood, and each one is a testimony of some wealth of character to which the soul may come.

But to what does all this move? To one grand fellowship of souls in which the fulness of each soul's life shall be realised under the supreme influence of the Christ, and in which the wealth of each shall be for the enrichment of all. The glory of life thus realised is even yet but dimly understood. The vision of it gleams before those on whom the light of Christ's life comes with self-revealing power ; and before them only when life is most responsive to His inspiring influence. On all sides life will reveal hidden stores of wealth when the Christ-Spirit comes to its own in human

history. There are still infinite possibilities for the soul of man, when the social life shall correspond with the individual aspiration, and when the music of the personal soul shall awaken infinite echoes in the life around.

5. *Then, God is in the Soul, and nowhere in His created universe so much as there*

This we declare, with new emphasis, in the light of the Christian revelation. The Kingdom of God is within. The material creation is a revelation of Divine power and wisdom. We stand in awe of the marks of the Divine presence there. But God's new creation is His most distinctive work ; and that is found in the spiritual life of mankind. Creation's innermost purpose stands unveiled in man. He is her end—her τέλος—her destined goal. The lower creation is in the interests of the higher. Nature is the groundwork for the history of the soul.

But the soul itself, by all its growth, and by all its achievements, witnesses to the Divine indwelling. From the dimmest twilight of consciousness on to the richest hope of the Christ-inspired individual, and the Christ-permeated society, the stamp of God is upon it. From the beginning the Divine Spirit has been there shaping the soul to these issues. He indwells the race. He is with us "all the days." He is the intimate Spirit of our most personal life. He dwells with us to bring us, unhesitatingly and unswervingly, to the goal of manhood in Christ. Oh, that those who believe would believe ! Would

that even Protestant Christians would trust God and the soul !

There is mystery here, but sufficient stands revealed for faith. God " hides Himself most wondrously." He is hidden in the depths of Nature's powers and processes. He is hidden still more in the deeps of the soul. He seems, at times, to have left us utterly to ourselves. Our freedom seems an awful fact. Yet, though largely hidden—that is His way—His control is sure. He " keepeth watch above His own." He does not let us out of hand. Right in the midst of our own life, and the unfolding of history, and the growth of mind and conscience, we awake and say : " Ah ! God is here ! We are His temple. The Spirit of God dwelleth in us." We wake to the apprehension of a great overruling Will which is Love. We take heart and trust. We become ready for life's full venture. We wait the Divine leading in tender awe even of our own soul's inmost life, and watch for God's will. We wait, too, with assurance, the realisation of the promise of the soul in all men. We stand expectant " till Christ be formed in us." To that we strain.

Chapter XI

GOD THE INDWELLING SPIRIT OF HUMANITY—THE CHRISTIAN VIEW

"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."—JOHN iv. 23.

"It shall be, in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh."—ACTS ii. 17.

"The tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His peoples, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."—REV. xxi. 3.

"And those few words of truth, first uttered here,
Have sunk into the human soul and heart;
A spiritual faith dawns bright and clear,
Dark creeds and ancient mysteries depart:
The hour of God's true worshippers draws near;
Then mourn not o'er the wrecks of earthly art:
Kingdoms may fall, and human works decay,
Nature moves on unchanged, *Truths* never pass away."
JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE'S "Jacob's Well."

"To Thee our full humanity
Its joys and pains belong;
The wrong of man to man on Thee
Inflicts a deeper wrong."

"Our Friend, our Brother, and our Lord,
What may Thy service be?—
Nor name, nor form, nor ritual word,
But simply following Thee."
WHITTIER'S "Our Master."

CHAPTER XI

GOD THE INDWELLING SPIRIT OF HUMANITY—THE CHRISTIAN VIEW

IT may be admitted that Divine inspiration is, in the broad sense, too manifest to be denied, and the faith may yet be beset by all kinds of limitations and prejudices. That, indeed, has been so. Men may believe that God guides and moulds the soul, but there are, it is said, racial preferences. Inspiration, it is understood, is possible only to certain types of culture, or to certain favoured persons and places, or to the life which is exclusively devotional or ascetic. The stream of Divine influence and control is held by some to flow through well-defined channels of officialdom or ritual. These limited conceptions of inspiration are a travesty of the true Christian view. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is God of all men, "of every nation, and of all tribes, and peoples, and tongues." He is "no respecter of persons."

1. *The Conception of God's indwelling Presence only by degrees escapes such limitations*

According to Hebrew thought, as is well-known, there were special places where Jehovah might appear to men. It was Moriah or Bethel; Shiloh or Jerusalem. In these God had graciously shown

Himself in the reassuring dream of the night, or in the strong moral monition of waking thought. They were spots of sacred memory. In them the veil of this material world had been lifted and the Divine light had shone through. God might declare Himself elsewhere, but only certain spots were *known* to be places of Divine revelation. Jacob waked in astonishment and awe at Bethel and said: "Surely there is a Jahveh at this place, but as for me, I knew it not." Moses "in the back of the wilderness," wandering about the steppe-land with his flock, came upon a theophany in the burning bush, and Horeb became known as "the mountain of God." Popular thought in Jesus' time was still troubled as to whether Zion or Gerizim was the mountain where men ought to worship (John iv. 20)—where men should "seek God." And there is no need to question that by all the sacred associations of some spots, and the comforting assurances which had come to the soul there, God was, in them, more easily found. The error was in confining the Divine revealing to them.

Similarly, inspiration was attributed to rare individuals of prophetic insight and of that foresight which sprang from a deeper view of the moral order behind material forces and historical events. Again inspiration was specially attributed to the priestly class who officially represented the people before God, with due and proper ritual. There was nothing wrong in thinking that certain individuals might be gifted for special service. It was wrong

only to hold this in an exclusive way, and not to make the moral condition the all-important one. To the latest day of Judaism it was difficult for many to believe in a God who dwelt, not only " in the high and holy place," but " with him also that was of a contrite and humble spirit " (Isa. lvii. 15)—with him who was but a humble seeker, the simple good soul. It was difficult to believe that *the whole nation* might become the inspired prophet of Jehovah (Isa. xlix.). Yea, it was more difficult still to anticipate that God would pour out His Spirit upon *all flesh*, and that not only the sons and daughters should prophesy and the old men dream dreams, and the young men see visions ; but that upon the *servants* and *handmaids* — the slaves of the household — God's Spirit should be poured (Joel ii. 28, 29). A universal inspiration has seemed, of all things, the most impossible of credit.

Every nation has been limited just by the peculiarity or eminence of its genius, and the legitimate sources of its pride. The Greek genius lay in the line of æsthetic and philosophic culture, but to Greeks other nations were but rude barbarians—not only uncultured, but incapable of culture. The Hindu is by nature contemplative and ascetic. According to him, manhood's best is only to be attained by restrictive self-discipline. This becomes to him a divine art. The Western, in his view, is incapable of it. He is coarse in his make-up, too fleshly, too much attached to the world and life to find Divine peace. The Roman, and also the

Chinese ideal is the ideal of the trained citizen, fully capable in the citizenship of this world. But manhood has seemed both to Roman and Chinaman as only realisable in his kind of Empire. The belief in the inspiration of special ideal types of men, and of these only, dominates this kind of thinking.

The early Christians fell into their own kinds of limitation. They had Jesus' word that the Father of men sought those who would worship Him in truth of spirit, and that without distinction of nationality. But they thought of the coming of their Lord as imminent, and, therefore, of the salvation only of the few from the approaching destruction. Jewish Christians could not think of Gentiles coming into the blessings of Christian life, except by the way they themselves had come, through the door of Jewish nationality. The Gentiles, they thought, must become part and parcel of the covenant people. They must follow certain Jewish national customs. The true life in all men must be of this type.

Later Christianity has not escaped its limitations. It has been dogged at many a step of its way by the return of monastic ideals and by theories of an exclusively sacerdotal salvation. Faith in missions to the heathen required to be reborn at the end of the eighteenth century. Many Christians, to say nothing of eminent scientists like Charles Darwin, needed convincing of the salvability of the lower races of mankind and especially of cannibal peoples. These were inhuman, akin to brute beasts.

The conception that God has left no people without witness of Himself (Acts xiv. 17); that His moral law is written upon heart and conscience (Rom. ii. 15); that He is in touch with every man, for His own redeeming ends, has quite apparently come into clearness only by degrees.

2. *Early Christian Experience opened up new Vistas of the indwelling of God's Spirit with men*

The Spirit came upon masses of the people and wrought great changes without distinction of race, or social status, or degree of culture. In the new manhood there was neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bondman nor freeman. These distinctions had been marked enough, but they vanished when the new-born entered into the life where for each one Christ was all and in all (Col. iii. 11). The truth had come to light that there was salvation for man as man. This meant faith in the complete salvability of the race.

See what actually happened—what introduced this comprehensive hope and outlook. In the days of darkness which immediately succeeded the crucifixion of Jesus the disciples timidly came together. They were stunned by what had transpired. Then they were assured that their Lord was risen and glorified. When His life was seen in truer perspective they joyfully recognised that the grace of God had appeared in Him. They saw, too, the generous compass of that grace. Knowing the Master's love and goodness, coming under His sway,

they felt at once His deep union with God and their own kinship with Him. There sprang up, then, within them the sense of their spiritual sonship to God ; their oneness or kinship, through the quickening influence of their Master, with the Father. They were delivered from the bondage of legalism and a striving after outward conformity to legal standards of righteousness, by the deeper inward conformity of the heart to God. They were, at the same time, saved from the tyranny of the sensuous life, by their new passion for Christ and His pure ideals and desires. They put on the character of their Master. They were in these respects a wonder to themselves. They were miracles of God's grace. They were kept only by the power of God poured out on them. And as strange as any power in their own life was the power which wrought so mightily through them for the redemption of others. This is that experience which stands for all time as typical of what the Spirit of God may do with men. As though to emphasise the point that here is told out, what may be done with man as man, when touched by the inspiration of God, many of those who were redeemed were gathered from the uncultured, the outcast, and abandoned classes.

But here again limitation of view has arisen. That gracious experience of spiritual regeneration, which was tidal in its sweep, has encouraged Evangelicals to despise knowledge. " The wisdom of the wise "—that wisdom to which the greatest fact, Christ Jesus and His love, is of little account—

is certainly to be rejected. But knowledge of the world and life cannot be vain. Science is not to be despised in the interests of religious knowledge. Both speak of God. Let chief things reckon as chief certainly, among those who would be truly wise. Æstheticism, again, in all its forms, must be welcomed, though the chief influence in refining our natures be intimate knowledge of the noblest personalities. Self-discipline, too, is necessary. But it will narrow and harden unless it is inspired by personal devotion and exercised ever with the object of wider life and service. The truth is that the Greek and Jewish ideals were rejected only to be reborn in Christian forms. Tirading against Humanism, in the name of Christianity, is foolish and one-sided.

The new and deeper inspiration of human life represented by Christianity is not to be considered as despising the ways of intellect, or the feeling for the beautiful, or the endeavour by self-discipline to school one's powers. Only, the Christian inspiration, because of the unique and penetrative influence of the life and Spirit of Jesus, takes deeper hold and quickens the inward moral life, touching the very founts of reverence, love, and obedience. It is inspiration in the essentials of manhood.

3. *The Spirit of God is, in Christian Redemption, laying claim to the heart of mankind*

The Christian Gospel is a universal message of redeeming grace. It is no mere declaration of

gracious intention. It is God seeking every soul. God was, in Christ, at work on the great work of reconciliation. Through Jesus, He was coming to close quarters with the human heart with mighty persuasive power. He was making appeal to the manhood in every man, bidding it rise up, and be all it was in it to be, assuring it of gracious and infinite help. Jesus, in the perfect humanness and divineness of His nature, is the heart of the Eternal seeking every soul for good, coming in gracious condescension into vital and sympathetic touch with humanity.

Apart from such a Gospel and such active redeeming power, there could be no hope of the realisation of one society of love on earth. If there be not one great Spirit of love, interested in every soul, through whom each one may surely come to the truth of his life and to loving union and full co-operation with his fellows, the dream of an ideal Society is vain. The goal must be guaranteed to us. It is not in us, imperfect as we are, to reach it of ourselves. Both wisdom and power fail. In the realm of the spirit where freedom has full play, where error and sin are so possible, and where through the multitude of wills infinite confusion often seems so inevitable—here there must be the all-prevailing Spirit who is truth and love, or no ordered life may be. Every form of union among men, in every age, is some witness of this Spirit, but if there is assurance that through Jesus Christ the Spirit of God has just the means whereby a complete recon-

ciliation of man with God and of man with man may be effected, then the real foundations of a universal Society have been laid.

The Apostle Paul was well assured that his own conversion was of such a character as to give him a Gospel for any and every man (Gal. i. 16). If there is a complete Gospel for anyone there is a Gospel for all. That which touches the very heart of life, touches all life. The individual, as we now know, samples and repeats the race. Society is the larger human life in larger relations. Every true Christian who found real spiritual emancipation through Jesus Christ became a herald of the Kingdom of God. What God had done for one He could and would do for all, even those furthest from Him. As inheritors of a common redemption men drew to one another. All kinds of middle walls of partition began to fall—race prejudice, pride of faith, contempt of ignorance, despair of the outcast, repudiation of the reckless, the sanctity which withdrew in holy horror from the sinner ; all that bitterness, hatred, envy and uncharitableness which was far from believing or hoping all things concerning others. Man's sympathy, as God's salvation, must be for all.

Buddhism to-day claims more millions than Christianity, but it is through the redemption in Jesus that the nations are making for the goal of human brotherhood. The one Divine Society on earth is in many lands gleaming into view. Could the Christian take the wings of an angel and visit

the companies of followers of Jesus in China, India, Africa, the Pacific Islands, New Guinea and Madagascar ; in the countries of Europe and America ; in the British Colonies and the homeland, what varieties of type, but what a glorious unity of the Spirit he would discover—one the praise of every heart ; one, in all essentials, the ideal of every life. This is the visible promise of the greater thing yet to be. The shape which the one society in love takes is the shape given to it by Jesus Christ. When the Divine Spirit shall have harmonised all the interests of human life, and gathered the wealth of all varieties of life into one rich co-operative whole, when at last the glory and honour of the nations shall have been gathered into the Eternal City of God, the Spirit of Jesus will be the dominating Spirit.

The faith of the Christian is not theoretical. When it takes this wide sweep, it is tenaciously clinging to the skirts of the real. As Jesus said, "the Kingdom of Heaven is here"—"among you." There is a real beginning. The promise of it all is presented in actual fact. The society already established in Jesus' name has in it the principle and spirit of a universal society.

4. *The Universalism of the Gospel goes back upon the Universalism of Jesus*

It is His thought and Spirit which have reproduced themselves in this new and grand vision of God's purposes for the race. He thought of the

Kingdom of God as a leaven which should leaven the whole mass of mankind ; as a seed which should produce a tree such that all the birds of heaven should lodge in the branches thereof. The Master, though feeling the call imperative to minister first to the Jewish people, if perchance they might still be brought to fulfil their religious mission, had already over-stepped mere tribal limits in His regard for the hated and alien Samaritan. The universalism of Jesus is fully implied in His devotion to "the lost"—the abandoned of men—and in His basing salvation on their simple loyalty to Himself. This would have been the narrowest of bases had He not been the broadest of personalities. But here were all the essentials—the soul in need face to face with One mighty to save. The Spirit of Jesus operating on a Peter brought him to recognise that "God is no respecter of persons ; but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him" (Acts x. 35). The universalism of Paul was rooted in the universalism of his Master, the very heart of whose Gospel Paul recognised was salvation for all men.

It were possible to deduce the idea of one Society, possessed by one Spirit through which its goal is reached, if we were to consider how one civilisation is being evolved from the warring elements of tribes and races. The *material* interests of life are bringing the nations steadily into one great peaceful federation. It were possible to see the same thing in ways of deeper significance, by noting how litera-

ture, art, and science become more international and cosmopolitan. We already approach to a community of *nobler interests* and feeling and life. But a great doubt remains—a possible antinomy or inner contradiction—as to the *deepest things* of all, unless there is promise of the union of hearts in ideals, hopes and aspirations, in profound reverences, and essential loyalties.

Here the Christian Gospel of the spiritual Lordship of Jesus Christ speaks the most decisive word. Under His mighty, inspiring sway, the heart of humanity will surely become one, and realise its ideal perfection, gathering up all the riches of its life into one vital whole. The day will then declare that the tabernacle of God is with men. He Himself shall be manifestly among them—their God (Rev. xxi. 3). The goal of that Spirit which dwells with men will have been reached. It is no mere philosophy which inspires this glorious hope, but the God-given fact of Christ and Christianity.

Chapter XII

THE INCOMING OF GOD—OR THE GROWTH OF THE DIVINE IN HISTORY

"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." "There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man coming into the world."—JOHN i. 4, 9.

"God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."—1 JOHN v. 11.

"The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven." "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."—1 COR. xv. 47, 49.

"Religion instead of fearing Evolution should rather welcome it as essentially a religious conception of the world. It is of necessity a confirmation that man's powers correspond with reality, and that his highest powers have the fullest correspondence."—J. OMAN'S "Vision and Authority," p. 12.

"There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning, endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been and are being evolved."—"ORIGIN OF SPECIES" (closing words).

"If it hath pleased God the Creator to fit up one system with one Sun, to make the daylight of several worlds, so it may fitly have pleased God the Revealer to kindle amid the ecliptic of history One Divine Soul, to glorify whatever lies within the great year of His moral Providence and represent the Father of Lights."—JAMES MARTINEAU'S "Miscellanies."

CHAPTER XII

THE INCOMING OF GOD—OR THE GROWTH OF THE DIVINE IN HISTORY

THE world and life are largely represented, in modern days, and by certain leading sections of thought, as involved in an iron-bound system of law, which leaves room for change, even for cyclic evolutionary change, but not for permanent progress. It is contended that no addition to Nature is possible. In her system there is no place for freedom ; or if freedom of a kind there be it is within the narrowest range, and only as part of a fixed unprogressive order of nature. In truth, real freedom of the soul and God seem to be barred out.

Does such a general conception of things accord with fact? Surely not. It is but a nightmare of the scientific imagination. Order, it is said, is heaven's first law. If that be first, progress is second. Both are equally characteristic of the Creation, as we know it. God's world is not, apparently, stored with powers and left to spin along on its own account. His hand is upon it all the way. The Creation is no finished product.

1. *The History of the World is strewn with new Creations*

There was a point when vegetable life was impossible on our planet. But vegetable life, in due time,

arose. It was a new creation. Nothing which went before explained it. Spontaneous generation, so far as we know, is a gratuitous hypothesis. The power to transform mere matter into growing vital forms, and into all the variety of the vegetable world, is the secret of the living vegetable cell. Science itself demands that we accept that fact. That living cell was a new thing.

The scientific mind has difficulty in delimiting the spheres of the vegetable and animal world. The one appears to merge into the other. There are forms of life which seem to cross the spheres and participate in characteristics of both. We set down the fact, so as not to blink it. But animal life is again a new thing. Of that there can be no question. It derives its sustenance from forms of matter already wrought up for it by the vegetable world. To a very slight extent only can animal life absorb mineral foods. Animal life is clearly distinguished from vegetable, again, in the more or less of consciousness which belongs to it. This passes through all grades from the lowest forms of sensitiveness to the highest forms of animal intelligence. Animal life is a new creation.

There is a point where animal life is passing over into the beginnings of a personal life, self-conscious, self-ordered, endowed with reason and conscience—the life of man. The difficulty of tracing absolute beginnings may once more baffle us. But we are in no doubt that, once it has emerged, here is a new thing. There may be what seem to

be rudiments of conscience in higher animals, but the animal, even in highest forms, does not gather its life into one and assume personal responsibility. Man, with all the possibilities that are in him—of the attainment of knowledge and skill ; of taking the wide sweep and high flights of thought ; of rediscovering the mind in things ; of ordering life according to law—man is a new creation.

But among men there are gifted spiritual personalities. The mass of men live according to the order which is already established. They take conscience ready-made. They attempt no heroic flight of genius or originality. They are, in a sense, of the earth, earthy. What of " the second man " is in them is what is already incorporated in the race. They are moral, but in the traditional meaning of the word. There are, however, prophetic souls, creative personalities ; men through whom new light and progress come in. They attempt the greater things. They are the men of ideals, the men of faith. They are related to earth, but also to heaven. One part of their environment is the world and its life, but the other part is that higher life to which they stand open, and from which their inspirations flow in. The great formative and creative Spirit of the world finds in them its instruments. Through them " the new creation " is being brought in. Each one of them is a new creation.

Christ Jesus may be ranked among these higher spiritual personalities ; but among them He yet

stands alone. No scientific account of life can leave Him out. In the midst of history, a part of it and the world, He appears. But what antecedents fully explain Him? He is *par excellence* a new creation. Unless we are prepared to split creation in twain we must find room in it for Him. But view the world and life from the stand-point at which we have now arrived, and it seems to be all of a piece. The whole is one progressive creation. There is law but there is progress. The creative Hand is everywhere intervening—is throughout operative.

2. *The Creative Process is continuous*

Evolution is accepted by thinking minds, though there are large gaps in the proof, as the abundantly demonstrated manner of the world's development. The new creations already described come in by slow degrees of change. The final origins are hidden. If they ever could have been discovered by our faculties the paths are not traceable now. Many steps in the process have become obliterated. All we know is that here and there the new fact presents itself. Whatever the gradation of the origin, the new fact is there. We must either say that life, consciousness, reason, conscience, creative personality, Christ—all were already present in some inherent powers of the rock—of matter—in its primal state; or that something is added, that there is some incoming of a creative, formative Spirit in the course of the development. But if the gradation is one continuous process, the creative

Hand is there all the time. That progressive gradation is the outstanding fact of life taken as a whole. One great order of life dove-tails into another ; species arise from species by successive small variations. Many variations in the descending scale arise. It is variations along the line of the progressive groove of change which are finally preserved. There is a survival of the fittest. We may, indeed, question the meaning of this freedom in things. The process may seem to be aimless ; but presently the course of development is such that we cannot believe it to be by accident. Besides, there is not only variation in life of a particular kind, through which some more efficient species arises ; but every organ of life shows like change and a like survival of the fittest. We have only to think here, of the gradations in the development of the eye, or of the heart, or of the nerve ganglia, by which each has come to be what it is. Progressive variations do arise which produce these marvels of design. To say they are accidental is, in a scientific sense, to say nothing. They seem to us to be evidence of the formative power, the creative mind, present in creation. The fact is that progressive change never ceases. This, in our view, is only to say that the creative power is ever present.

3. *Each new Range of Life is supernatural to the one preceding*

Life is something entirely supernatural to the world into which it first comes. There was once

a lifeless nature. Life presumes an ordered material world for its existence. It presumes the operation of the forces of gravitation and of chemical combination. It includes the operation of these forces, however, in a new and higher activity. Animal life, when it appears, is supernatural to a world in which nothing higher than vegetable life has arisen. It presumes the forces already named. It reproduces them and the virtues of vegetable life in a new and higher combination. So similarly personal life presumes the physical as a suitable field for its exercise, and such a physical life as is throughout relative to personal needs—the lower to the higher life. But personal life, in the free, conscious, rational, moral, and spiritual aspects, is entirely beyond what has preceded it in nature. Nature is necessary to personal life as we know it ; but personal life uses up all the natural forces and conditions in new forms, and for new ends of its own.

4. *Man is but the Supreme Case of an Order of Nature into which progress enters as well as law*

He is supernatural to all that has preceded him. He lifts all his antecedent forces and conditions into new forms, making them material for the personal life. He presumes them all, but adds something which comes in only through himself. Let it be frankly conceded that there is no absolutely new beginning in man. His physical life traces back to the animal life beneath him. But, at some

point, that variation occurred which started the new order of being ; the great step was taken in Nature towards all that is included in human history. A new heaven and a new earth then began to be ; freedom was born. The significance of the event lay in the fact that Nature had been moving up from an absolutely mechanical order of the material world, through successive forms of life, until here was born the creature most susceptible to change, to self-regulated change, and offering more and more an open way for the free incoming of that formative Spirit through which all natural progress had been wrought. Man's history shows that his birth was but the beginning of new and higher progressive change. History even less than Nature and physical life is capable of being interpreted as an accident. It has evidently been shaped under higher influences, and is a witness to the continued incoming of God.

5. *Jesus Christ is Manhood in its Perfection*

He is the freest, purest, noblest ; mirror of the Eternal Will ; incarnation of the Divine in history. We *may* classify Him, as we have said, with gifted spiritual personalities, but among them He is unique. They were inspired organs of the Creative Spirit ; but in Him dwelt "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." In Him was life indeed. It is the perfection of His manhood occurring where it does, in the midst of the whole course of development, which makes Him as man explicable only

as God's gift to men. Yet, in the interpretation of the world and life here given, He is but the last and greatest of those changes by which He who hides Himself so wondrously has made Himself known as the very Spirit of life, presiding over all its course, creating at every step its progress. Nature is a strange combination of concealing and revealing. But the reason of that we may see. Had it been entirely hidden in the processes of Nature, God's freedom would have been doubted and denied ; on the other hand, frequent exercise of creative freedom in great changes would have produced the impression that the world was governed by caprice.

The wonders and mighty works Jesus wrought may be anticipations of what a fully-gifted manhood yet may do. By other and completer ways we are mastering disease. Death is losing all its sting to the soul, and becoming a gentle translation. But Jesus' life was supernatural in a greater and grander sense than the miracles bespoke. In Him the spiritual was triumphant. All life's limitations, and death itself, were no hindrance to the perfecting of His life and work. He was more than conqueror. He sublimed all life's conditions ; lifted all this lower life into means of the higher. His life stood open-doored to the Highest ; His will answered to the will of the Father. There was freedom Godward and manward in Him. Creation waited, according to Paul the Apostle, for the revealing of the sons of God. Here in Jesus,

her expectation was already realised. Holy freedom was born. In Him nature and spirit were no longer at strife. Strife there was, involving Gethsemane and Calvary ; but it was strife with the unregenerate will of man, with spiritual wickedness as a destructive force.

6. *The Order of Creation and Life here stands revealed*

It begins in a mechanical order but does not end there. Life supervenes, and life is all of a piece. It is one process. The general principle, which is illustrated throughout its course, is that prolonged preparation and gradual advancement is succeeded, at great epochs, by some distinct new gift from above. We have marked the several stages of the entrance of life, and then of the coming of conscious and of personal life. In our own individual history there is a prolonged preparation by natural discipline, and then at successive stages the inflowing of higher inspirations. In the history of mankind there was like preparation through many generations, and then exceptional spiritual epochs. Transcending these entirely, a new order of manhood begins in Jesus Christ.

Theologically this is to be interpreted as, on the one hand, the fuller and fuller development of the Spirit which is immanent in Nature ; and on the other hand, the incoming as from above, or beyond Nature, of more and yet more of the life of the Son of God—the only-begotten One. He is perfect life, kin to Nature, but not Nature's product. His is the

life continuously imparted to the world, welcomed in great new births by the immanent Spirit. He comes in the fulness of personal grace and truth in Jesus as the Father's direct and perfect gift. Nature, issuing as it does in man and his history, is seen to be the expression of the Divine Spirit, but it does not come to its own except by successive gifts from above. The capacity for life is divine ; but that capacity needs infilling. We are ourselves, in a limited way, illustrations of this greater life. There is in us the faculty for the higher life, but it is not independent of the inspiration of God. So, in the fulness of the time, the Father gave the Son to be the originator of a new and higher manhood, in the end perfect and permanent. This was God's great incoming to life.

Some will hesitate when it comes to these high theological constructions of history, necessary as they may seem to the philosophic Christian mind. So be it. Return may be made to the facts as given. It will still stand out clearly from our discussion that the world illustrates, by its life, no mechanically fixed system, but a system of continuous progressive change. What is before us is not Nature without God, but a Nature into which God is coming all the time, and a history which more and more reflects a higher reason and will. That seems also to be distinctly interpretable as the result of a co-operation of two supreme powers—the one imbedded in Nature and its slow processes of change ; the other coming in upon Nature in creative

acts, until man is born, who stands open, and ever more open to the incoming of God. Since Christ came, this higher human life has taken the form, for those who know Him, of the incorporation of the Christ-life and the fulness of it with the human soul. Richest Christian experience says :—" I live ; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." Christ's indwelling is God's full incoming. The Spirit, quickener of our spirit, raises all our powers that we may receive the Christ, God's incomparable gift.

BOOK IV

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS GOD

CHAPTER XIII

GOD WITH US

"In Him we live and move and have our being." "For we are also His offspring."—ACTS xvii. 28.

"Abba Father." "If God is for us, who (or what) is against us?"—ROM. viii. 15, 31.

"That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."—EPHES. ii. 7.

"The best of all is, God is with us."—WESLEY (among his last words).

"Ineffable is the union of man and God in every act of the Soul. The simplest person who in his integrity worships God, becomes God: yet for ever and ever the influx of this better and universal self is new and unsearchable. It inspires awe and astonishment. . . . It is . . . the infinite enlargement of the heart with a power of growth to a new infinity on every side. It inspires in man an infallible trust."—EMERSON'S "The Over-Soul."

> "But souls that of His own good life partake
> He loves as His own self; dear as His eye
> They are to Him: He'll never them forsake;
> When they shall die, then God Himself shall die;
> They live, they live in blest eternity."—HENRY MORE.

CHAPTER XIII

GOD WITH US

THE great value of Christianity we have learned lies not simply in its system of life, but in its continuous witness to two supreme facts—parts again of one unique experience. These are the incomparable gift of God in the person of Jesus Christ; and that great outburst of the human spirit which succeeded the new revelation of God's grace to men. With these two facts in the forefront of the world's historical memory, life has taken on new values and undying hopes. The human mind never escapes the sense of life's greatness and promise. Faith has enlarged its bounds. The natural world may mean much; personal life means infinitely more.

The chief Christian facts have cast light back on all creation, and if they do not enable us to solve all mysteries as to the government of the world, they at least leave us in no doubt as to the main purport of life, and they enable us

> "to assert Eternal Providence
> And justify the ways of God to men."

They have also brought to light new capacities of the human soul as responsive to the riches of personality in the Christ, and as a God-inspired potentiality. They have brought to light the par-

ticipation of all men in God's spiritual care, and something of the kinship of the human spirit the wide world over and in all the generations.

Then from facts of nature, and still more from facts of spiritual history viewed in connection therewith, we have learned that the creation is no finished product, but that its progressive life, in all its grades, is ever proceeding from the Creative Spirit. He evermore creates all things new. The antecedent is being lifted into a higher consequent. The old material is wrought up into new and nobler forms.

And now from this distinctively Christian point of view, certain consequences of moment follow.

1. *The Personal Interest of the World is not only supreme, it is all-dominating*

The mind of our time is largely oppressed by a scientific fatalism. We are in the grip of unrelenting law. The material forces of life are held up to us as overpowering. For many, God is banished from the world. There is no such thing as Providence. Personal interests count for nothing. From the Christian standpoint the reverse of these things is true. Personal interests are supreme. The Creative Spirit who gave the Christ is Father of men. Christ and His cross are the sign that there is passion—moral passion—in God's part and lot in life. God is with men as their Redeemer. The interests are those of the Father in His child ; and specifically in the per-

sonal character and well-being of the child. The natural world is but the theatre of this personal drama. He who thinks otherwise has not learned of Christ, or does not believe that He expresses the deep truth of existence. Everything must be subordinate to the personal interests of the children of God. This moral judgment, starting from the sacredness of the inner life of man and from the unspeakable worth of the personality of Jesus as factors of the world's life and history, must stand, if any rational interpretation of existence is to be maintained. This judgment creates the faith that there is nothing sinister in nature ; but even amid the wrack of worlds, if necessary, the faith must be maintained, if the Christian rightly interprets what is given to him in Christ, and his own inner life.

From the Christian point of view, therefore, the material world falls into entire subordination ; and at last, the Father stands face to face with His child, to whom He has given all pledges that not only nothing shall harm him, but nothing shall fail of all those promises of good which life contains.

From the Christian point of view this, too, follows :—

2. *The Progressive Life of the World is derived, at all points of the history of nature or life, from the Presence of God*

We have seen that, at every step of nature, something is evidently added. Life is an unexplained

addition to the material world. Variations in forms of life may seem to be accidental, but presently, the progressive character of the variations which are capable of surviving in the keen competition of existence are found to be such that we cannot attribute *them* to accident. They are the direct result of the intervention or co-operation of some rational formative spirit. Then, whatever be said of lower life, it is certain that the last word about man is neither that he is a creature of circumstance absolutely, nor that he is a mere product of caprice. The growth of individual character, and the progress of the race have to be accounted for. To speak of accident here is to speak foolishness and use meaningless words. It is simply to say that something which we recognise to be of great, even of supreme significance happens, and we have no suggestion as to how it happens. That is to abandon any rational construction of existence at all. Then if these things be true of the masses of men, how much more are they true of the great creative souls of history! Are *they* but the result of capricious accident? Surely not! Unless we deny the plainest elements of experience, we are bound to admit something of free-will in man. How then, amid a myriad wills, unless there be some moulding Hand upon us—some great persuasive Spirit who knows the way we take—does anything emerge but confusion? Apparent answers are given to that question, by speaking of human wills in the terms of mechanical force; but either

this amounts to a denial of freedom altogether, or the point is never faced that we choose the good, all the while believing in the essential goodness of existence, and cherishing the confident hope of

> "One far-off divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves."

If the chief interest of the world is personal, and if progress witnesses to the continued creative activity of God, then :

3. *Life at its best is God-dependent*

Men—especially English men—speak much of self-reliance. But the whole system of life which the Christian religion stands for is a system of interdependence and of God-reliance. No soul can be its best save by the grace of God, and that chief testimony of God's grace, the loving ministry of the good. There must, of course, be no pauperism of spirit—no dependence on God or on the beneficent aid of others where self-effort is sufficient. Every man must count for one, and for one soul at the fullest bent of its capacity. Parasitism is degrading. But our own powers and resources do not carry us very far. Physically that is so ; but our heart's courage, too, if we are to stand absolutely alone, will not prove sufficient. There can be little, if any, hope or faith cherished in lonely isolation. Imagine the barrenness of life for one who would really be independent ! The thing is impossible, of course, for babes cannot grow like mushrooms

without tending. But grant a beginning with a good physical frame. Bid adieu then to all that civilisation provides, and resort to the simple life in the crude sense ; would it carry you much beyond the existence of the monkey ? Imagine one cut off from all the cultivation of the literature, the science, the religion of the past—imagine one really independent ; what a poverty-stricken individual he would be ! A life isolated from all the sacred enthusiasms and holy passionate endeavours of the children of the ideal — what would that be worth ?

So a life that would shut out the grace of God in Christ is one which by a hardened self-dependence commits moral suicide. It courts the barrenness of death.

Oh no ! This were no way. Life needs contact of life—the responsiveness of sympathy. Love awaits the far echoes of love ; it seeks the co-operation of kindred spirits. Union is strength. Life at its best is life with wide interests, with rich interplay of other life, with co-operative ideals and effort. It is life individual, keenly personal, but, at the same time, life in which the whole circle of universal interests concentre in the single soul. It is life in which the one soul reflects and represents the meaning of all life. Life is love.

If God be ever-present, the companion-life of all who would live indeed, what folly that we should ever think to live on the principle of self-dependence ! If He is the source of progress—the life

of life—then we live in Him, or we cannot be said properly to live at all.

If, as the great religious souls have all, in some form, believed, there is above and around our life on earth, the life of the great and good who are hid with God ; and if the Father of souls never forsakes His fatherhood, and never leaves us entirely to the care of others, what trust, what hope, should be ours ! If God be for us, then who or what can be against us, in this or any world ? If this, however, be not true—if there be no help for the soul, and help at its direst need assuring its utmost good —there is no religion. Better cease to speak of it ! Life mocks us. What we call our conscience betrays us. It is time to forget it all—if that were possible.

The great facts of which Christianity is witness, however, assure us of God's personal interest and presence in life ; and through Christian experience as well as faith, we are further assured that :—

4. *Progress is ministered, in the Living Present, through those who are open-doored to God*

Life is not merely a self-development on natural lines ; unless within the natural we are to include all the environment of the personal Divine Spirit for which here we plead. Even as a matter of temper of life our best is not achieved in proud self-reliance, but in loving reliance on the helpful good around us. Life is sweeter so. We live our

best when we look to God. The historic Christ is the witness of God's interposing grace ; and of the rich grace of that grace. But such grace is not an incident ; it is continuous. That personal power does not dawn on life to fade and die. Our personal history has been dominated by its intervention. Christians are what they are by the grace of Christ the Lord. This they cannot but believe.

Trust in God, and such trust in the personal help of God as expresses itself in unrestrained believing prayer, has been essential to the best life. It is the men of religious faith who have been the persistent idealists. It is their hope, their courage, their endurance, their martyr suffering which has continuously redeemed the world from despair. Their faith has raised the gleaming vision of the greater thing which was still possible ; and though expectation oft trembled, they looked to God and He justified them, for their far-off hopes were again and again realised. Through them the world's life has ever been born again—born from above. Through them life is continuously being lifted into new and higher significance. The new creation, through them, is coming in. If we may revert to the illustration which comes from earlier stages of life, we may say that through them the progressive variations of type appear. Through them a new manhood is being ushered in. They are the witnesses of Him whose life it is to multiply life, whose joy is in its increase—the God of grace.

One point more—

5. *What Life may be we know not until it be lived, in some large measure, unto God*

No man has awakened to the possibilities of his own life, until faith becomes real. When the communion, in very life, of God and man becomes personal—on man's side carries with it conscience, and reason, and will—human life may be said reverently to take on something of the measure of God's. The eternal powers of good begin to find some free course in man. "All things," says the Apostle, "are yours, for ye are Christ's." Some sure guidance in the attainment of an ever larger measure of the eternal good is vouchsafed; and the soul therein realises its blessedness. But ah! who can tell what life may be, when, throughout the rich co-operative whole, it comes with united heart to be devoted to God; when all the avenues of the larger common life stand open to the instreaming of Divine grace; when human life in all its social meaning takes on something of the measure of God's! How full is the promise of this in Christ! Our fairest dreams cannot picture it. It rises before us only in the most distant gleams. Life God-inspired, God-empowered; filled with the Spirit of Him we know in Christ—this is our destined goal. With this we comfort our hearts. We wait, but we eagerly pray for that "coming."

Chapter XIV

SALVATION THROUGH ATONING LOVE

"When the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons."—GAL. iv. 4, 5.

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."—2 COR. v. 19.

"God being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ."—EPHES. ii. 4, 5.

"God who saved us, and called us with a holy calling . . . according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before times eternal."—2 TIM. i. 9.

"The Lord and His Apostles never draw any distinction between the honour and the love of God, as if the one, impaired by human sin, must be satisfied before the other can go out to pardon it. . . . They never conceived that His honour wanted satisfaction. But blending His honour and His love together, they supposed that He yearned, like a mother deprived of her children's love, for the creatures who were alienated from Him by wicked works, so that the movement of redemption did not spring from a sensitive honour which had to be repaired, but from a passion of love that needed satisfaction."—DR. FORSYTH'S "Revelation and the Person of Christ." Essay in "Faith and Criticism," p. 232.

"It is not too much to say that the whole doctine of the atonement, as popularly understood for generations, was based more largely upon the Book of Leviticus than upon the spiritual insight of the second Isaiah, or upon the teachings of our Lord Himself."—DR. C. R. BROWN, "Third International Congregational Council," p. 352.

CHAPTER XIV

SALVATION THROUGH ATONING LOVE.[1]

THE pre-eminent case of Divine intervention in the world's history is the coming of Jesus. He came in the fulness of time, but He is not the outcome merely of antecedent history. The historical conditions do not account for Him. He is, in the New Testament language, to be spoken of only as the "one-begotten." He does not belong simply to the course of natural development. This is not to say that He is out of line in history; for we have seen that the supernatural addition is normal. He is, however, the supreme and unparalleled instance of the incoming of God. In Him is "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9). He is the first-fruits of a new manhood. In Him, at last, there is the entrance of the Divine into life and history in such measure as to secure the ideal ends contemplated from the beginning. The goal is historically sure. The dominant personality is with us.

The familiar question whether, had there been no sin, Christ's coming would have been a necessity, is here definitely answered in the affirmative. So far as we may judge by analogy we are bound to conclude that, whatever might have been the natural growth towards a certain moral perfection,

[1] *Cf.* Chapter V.

and though the fulness of the time might have been more speedily reached, unaided development was insufficient to reach the goal. The uplift from above, by the Divine descent into life, was necessary. This is the way of life as it has been laid down.

The personal interest of the world, we have said, is the dominant interest, and progress is the witness of the presence of God. The coming of Jesus is the reaffirmation of both these points, with a mighty emphasis. Through Him God intervenes to secure the permanent and highest good of His children. He comes bringing salvation, intent on love's noble ends. In Him, the Father seeks His children.

Wherever this Gospel of Divine intervention has been proclaimed and received, the mind has been impressed by—

1. *The Grace of It*

God's greatest gifts to us are loved personalities. Each one is, in some deep sense, a new gift. The new-born child brings unspeakable comfort and assurance; and fills life with promise (Is. ix. 6). Every gifted personality tells something of life's larger treasure. In Jesus God gives *His Son* —the Son of His love—unto men. He is the expression of the very heart of God (Heb. i. 3). He is the light of life, brings to light life's deep meanings. But He is the life itself, and the embodiment of God's redeeming love. The Son and Father are

one. The Father is in Jesus, flinging Himself into the world's life, with a fulness of gracious intent.

Salvation, expressed in broadest terms, is the result of the Divine energy expending itself on behalf of the good of men. It is at last the Father seeking His child—person for person. Nothing must be suffered to veil for us this personal interest and activity ; though all kinds and degrees of personal intermediation are used. Every true soul is, in some part, the expression of God to every other, and the embodiment of Divine influence. But Jesus, in His human life, so fully expresses the mind and will of God, that God is wholly with us in Him reconciling the world unto Himself (Matt. i. 23 ; 2 Cor. v. 19). Here is found the one great Mediator.

Good is only wrought by effort of will. Especially is the wrong righted, the discord and confusion of life banished, the soul healed, and love's beneficent activity brought into full play only by an energy of will pure enough and strong enough to secure the great result. God alone is sufficient for these things. He intervenes by the gift of One whose holy character and whose loving will constitute Him Redeemer.

2. *The Intent of this Divine Intervention*

is nothing less than the perfecting of the whole human race—the bringing of God's "sons unto glory." The righting of the wrong of sin has bulked too largely in men's view. There must,

indeed, be that. Sin has barred and darkened the way of progress. It must be fully opened up again. But the perfecting of human life is something more than mere rectification. True, God intervenes through Christ to save men from the long and complex results of sin—from taint of blood, and weakness of will, and the depressing sense of guilt—from the impression that our ruin is irreparable and that we can never overtake the wrong since it multiplies itself so infinitely. The Redeemer comes to assure us of renewal, to purify the inner founts of feeling, to banish the sense of weakness by the assurance of His loving power, and the sense of shame by the grace of His oneness with us. He comes to help us to right the wrong within our own heart, to right the wrong in all the complex social life of the world, to dethrone the powers of evil which have entrenched themselves in life ; and to assure us that, by His aid, it is all possible. Nothing less than the recasting of life in the Master's spirit is here contemplated.

But this is not enough if we think of it simply as a process of rectification. We are not only to be saved from sin and death, but saved to life and the fulness of it. When we are once more in the broad high-way of life, there are heights to be won ; larger prospects and possible achievements open up before us. We must go from strength to strength. We must prove the wonders of God's grace. We must count in the realisation of the Kingdom of God. We must put on the fulness of the Christ-life, and

"grace for grace" (John i. 16). In the full energy of a renewed will, we must stand with the Christ, and be fellow-workers with God (1 Cor. iii. 9).

3. *There is Nothing so characteristic of the Divine Intervention for our Salvation as the manner of it—the passion of it*

The Cross of Jesus is the sign. It is the witness to a travailing love which counts no cost in the great redemptive work. Jesus and the Father were one (John x. 30). He kept the Father's commandments (John xv. 10). The cup He drank the Father gave Him to drink (John xviii. 11). Never was the Son in His earthly life so completely at one with the Father as when for love's great ends He suffered death (John xiv. 11). Here, then, is a Divine intervention, so whole-hearted, so self-abandoning, so completely in the interests of sinful men that we wonder and adore. The Divine heart can brook no further delay. Brooding love has exercised long patience; but now a last appeal is made to the human heart—to every remnant of good in man—by a sublime self-offering on man's behalf.

Strange it may seem, but there is no attempt to suppress sin by some fierce fiat of judgment. Such a suppression we now see would have meant the blotting out of man. The great God sets Himself to win man's heart. Salvation is to be wrought by the persuasions of grace. God trusts His children, and their response to His gracious appeal. Whatever

of discipline exists in life, it is not God's chief weapon. He seeks to completely transform life, to change every destructive element into means of good. "Black smoke of Tophet, filling all your universe," says Carlyle, "can yet by true heart-energy become *flame* and brilliancy of Heaven." Yes, but this needs the heart-energy of God. The great redeeming act by which the transformation of life is to be wrought is the gift of Jesus, and the sustaining of His loving sacrifice. Against a world's sin and rebellion God set this mighty converting power. And, let us take it in, He achieves nothing save through the souls He wins. He makes them as weapons of His mighty arm, but He must win them, to wield them. He stands by them; inspires them with a very heroism in doing good; and makes them capable of unselfish love and sacrifice like His own; but it is by contagion of His holy enthusiasm.

We need scarcely revert, except in the briefest terms to

4. *The Cost of this Redemption*

Love bore the heart of the Eternal into the great work. But love does not lessen, it increases the shame and pain which is suffered on behalf of those it would redeem. Nothing alters the fact that sin's corrupting domination must be mastered by the effort of holy will. Good is only established through travail, and by a persistent long-suffering patience, such as is the attribute of Divine Love

alone. The cost is infinite, beyond human reckoning, high as heaven, deep as hell. The Cross of Jesus tells of the sacrifice in a moment of history, but the travail is perpetual till the Kingdom come. Sin's deep injury and endless consequences could find no rectification save at such tremendous cost. The travail in its intensive force can only be measured as relative to God's own passion for the right. No estimate of social dislocation and the cost of restoring harmony is more than a legal estimate of the passion of the Divine heart. Social loss is but the summation of personal loss.

5. *The End sought by this Divine Intervention*

is nothing less than the complete redemption of the individual soul—its establishment in Christ-like character—and the permanent realisation of the Kingdom in which all things shall subserve the ends of love and make for larger life. The object is perfect individual and social good. In the individual the passion of the Cross is to inspire repentance and purify the affections ; it is to create a holy repugnance to things evil, and a warm love of the good ; it is to secure a consecration of the inmost heart to the will of God. In a word, what is in view is the righting of life, and the production of a passion for the good, the Christ-like life.

It is no mere judicial forgiveness which is in question. Nothing forensic, indeed, represents it. That would be to make the law an end. The life of the child is to the Divine Father the matter of

supreme importance. Get the child right, and, so far, what matters ought else?

Forgiveness is not by purchase. It is a pure act of grace. Nothing could be an equivalent to it. Forgiveness were vain, if the redeemed nature were not assured. But, assured by redemptive travail on the one hand, and by response of faith on the other, there is no hindrance to the free flow of pardoning love.

Redemption has not only the saving of the individual in view, but the permanent establishment of the social good. Evil multiplies itself by natural course, except so far as it is opposed by the good will. It creates social corruption; it gathers impetus, and by it life is deflected from its simplicity and reduced to confusion. Full salvation implies not only the restoration of the inner man, but the purification of his environment. This is a larger and a longer matter by far. But the redemption through Jesus Christ makes every saved soul a new power for the ensuring of the social good, a maker of the Heaven that is to be. The Saviour, too, is the Head of this new social power, consolidating it, making it compact, strongly co-operative—a fellowship for good mightier far than any combination for evil.

6. *We refer, lastly, to the Eternal Significance of the Divine Intervention*

He who knows God's gift in Christ knows that in Him was begun a final and crowning work for

men, from which there will be no drawing back. The promises in Him are "yea and amen." In Him we know the power which, according to our own sense of it, we believe to be capable of a world's redemption. We believe that He shall overcome, and be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. xvii. 14). "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. v. 12). But we trust not our own sense of these things; we trust rather the pledges of the Father and the Son. He who gave Jesus as the Saviour of the world will surely see that His word does not return to Him void but that it accomplishes that whereto He sent it.

Chapter XV

THE MARKS OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

"God with us."—MATT. i. 23.

"Christ liveth in me."—GAL. ii. 20.

"That ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."—EPHES. iii. 16, 17.

"He shall take of mine and shall declare it unto you."—JOHN xvi. 14.

"The Lord is the Spirit."—2 COR. iii. 17.

"His love"—the love of Christ—"is our security. And that love is so strong that nothing on earth can come between us and it. The sea of troubles that a Christian has to face, hardship and persecution of every kind, are powerless against it. . . . Crushed and routed, as we may seem, the Love of Christ crowns us with surpassing victory. For I am convinced that no form or phase of being, whether abstract or personal; not life or its negation; not any hierarchy of spirits; no dimension of time; no supernatural powers; no dimension of space; no world of being invisible to us now—will ever come between us and the love which God has brought so near to us in Jesus Messiah our Lord."—The Apostle Paul as paraphrased by SANDAY AND HEADLAM, "Commentary on Romans," ch. viii. 35—39.

"In joy of inward peace, or sense
Of sorrow over sin,
He is His own best evidence,
His witness is within.
The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again."

WHITTIER'S "Our Master."

CHAPTER XV

THE MARKS OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

RELIGION is not primarily theological thinking but vital contact with God—our contact with Him, His with us. It is not our right interpretation of the universe, but intercourse with God. It is truth, but truth in this relationship to Him who is the very truth of our own being. It begins in His grace. If there be no concern of God for us ; if we may not enter into personal holy union with Him, there is no need to trouble further. Nothing else matters. The whole Christian revelation, however, is a pledge Divine—written out in life and sacrifice, and soul-travail—that God is with us, and for us, to the full extent that good may be wrought in us. Life's ordinary gifts and sureties are carried up to the point of the "gift unspeakable," and the pledge eternal and comprehensive.

Religion in the earlier stages is the surrender of man to God, and the endeavour, in many a form, to appease and atone the Mighty One ; but, in its later stages, it is the joyful and trustful recognition that God is good, a God of grace. Man's only difficulty is to live up to his privilege. God is for us ; God is love.

Every religious soul should be assured of God's presence, and eager to discern the marks of it,

though the latter is of secondary importance. Life's highest joy is in the recognition of the Divine companionship, but that for a time has been withheld from some of the truest of God's saints.

In the treatment of our topic, we must first clear the ground.

1. *Conditions are laid down which are no Conditions of the Presence of God*

(*a*) There are those who have spoken of honouring the third person of the blessed Trinity as if something were missed by others who sought the presence of Christ without seeking in a distinct way for the presence of the Spirit. The attitude is either childish or has in it a finicking scrupulosity characteristic usually of the formalist. A similar kind of opposition and prejudice might be set up between the presence of the Father and the Son. The whole treatment of the matter does despite to the sublime spiritual unity in the Godhead. "I and my Father are one," says Jesus (John x. 30). "The Lord is the Spirit," says Paul (2 Cor. iii. 17). The office of the Spirit is none other than to awaken all our inner susceptibility to receive the indwelling Christ (Ephes. iii. 16, 17).

In the philosophical or theological construction of the world we distinguish, and must do so, between (1) the great creative and sustaining Power including the overruling Providence in life —the Power over life, the transcendent One ; and (2) the inner formative Spirit of the world and of

personal life—the Divine Power imbedded in life, the immanent One ; and again (3) the unique God-Man, who shares our nature and history, but is gift from above—the Christ who is to become incorporate with the personal life of all who will receive Him, the incarnate One.

So far, too, as our personal history is concerned we discern God in the ordering of our way, and specially in the manner in which life is regulated in all its circumstance, so that we shall not be overborne, or our personal development destroyed ; we discern God in the quickening and expanding susceptibilities of our inner life, the perfecting of faculty ; and we discern God in that personal hidden companionship which becomes ever more real to the pious soul. That which we in a pre-eminent sense call the Presence of God is this latter. To him who is determined to make life conformable to the Divine will ; to him who has reverent regard for every loftier thought, emotion, and choice, there is given an added element, so personal it is difficult to distinguish it from the inner self. It is that inspired movement towards the ideal of one's own life. It is what we would be and are not. Yet it is so much just the movement towards the Christ we know in history, we believe He must be concerned in it. The Godward motion of life, so far as we know it, is just the presence of Christ.

But we cannot distinguish in the motions of the soul at one time the Father, at another the Son, and at another the Spirit. No such Trinitarian

division of experience is possible. God's presence is the Father's gift of Himself, in His Son, through the quickening of our nature by His Spirit. But we name it best when we name it the presence of Christ. God's gift to us, in definite form, is His Son. When God's continued gift—His companionship—is granted to us, it is as Christ in us. This, too, is the form of our perfected life.

(*b*) There is a tendency, ever with us, to discover the presence of God only in association with certain exalted moods of the soul, with an ecstatic afflatus. There has been no greater error than this among the truly pious. What pain they have endured because they knew not only their hours on the mountain-top, but those in the deep valley! What dishonour to the grace of God was in their estimate of Him—though they discerned it not—in that they thought of Him as abandoning us when most we needed Him! His grace does not vary with our moods. One great purpose of the incarnation was to proclaim that God's presence is intimate with life in all its circumstances and conditions—a workaday presence taking on the form of every personal life. Our thought of the presence of God is not honouring to His grace when we put Him out of the common life and do not think of Him as ready to honour the humblest calling, or fulfil Himself through the simplest of every day experiences, as well as to use what we may too exclusively call the inspired mood.

(*c*) The presence of God is frequently not dis-

cerned until the way is past in which He truly walked with us. The pattern is only traced when the woven tapestry is complete. The secret of the seed is only discerned in the plant, the flower, the fruit. The golden thread of Providence is only seen when the issues of life emerge into clearness. The two disciples on the Emmaus journey felt their heart burn within them as the Master expounded to them the meaning of His passion, from the Scripture ; but they did not discover *Him* till, the journey ended, He was vanishing from their sight. In our Lord's description of the Judgment those who had ministered to Him are found exclaiming : " When saw we Thee an hungered and fed Thee? or athirst, and gave Thee drink? " They had served Him most effectually when ministering to the least of His brethren, all unconscious that they ministered to Him.

2. *The Practice of the Presence of God is necessary to its realisation*

If the presence of God, discerned or undiscerned in the course of life, is nothing less for us ultimately than the incorporation of the Christ mind, the Christ spirit, the Christ character, the Christ purpose of good among men, what a high discipline that implies ! For there is nothing personally given which is not personally appropriated. The bestowal of the riches of Christ implies the nature which can appropriate and use them. We need the inward quickening. We need also to make the

presence of God the unfailing quest of life. This must be a daily discipline, to which every faculty is schooled, and to which our whole manhood is consecrated. If God by intimate indwelling will make us truly His, and deign to use us, such a result demands our every power. The blessing cannot, in the nature of it, be given save as it is also attained. God gives, but under conditions which mean the height of our own activity.

The practice of the presence of God must be possible again to every soul. God is not the Saviour of the select. He would visit every child. He would ennoble every lot. He would sanctify every calling. The secret place of free, unrestrained communion may be the street, the mart, the factory or workshop, the field, the ship, the senate, on the pastor's round, in the preacher's pulpit. In any and every place the soul may meet its God. Unless the practice of the presence of God may be exercised on "the daily round" and in "the common task," certain orders of life and a vast scope of life is to be counted "unclean." The devotional life must be in no way exalted as the exclusive medium of God's visitation of the soul.

3. *The Marks of the Presence of God must now be made clear*

Every true experience may be the voice of God to us. The stars of heaven and the imperative of conscience both conveyed their sublime message to the philosopher Kant. The spirit with which

The Marks of the Presence of God

Nature is pregnant so spoke to Wordsworth that he wrote :

> "I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts."

The tender relations of simple human love have been more eloquent of the grace of God in life, to many, than almost any other experience. When, however, the soul would be assured of a personal power of help which can bring final moral victory, it finds this bespoken only in Christ.

The Divine destiny of our life there stands revealed. We are to be conformed to His image (Rom. viii. 29). We are to become brothers, in all the essentials of our nature, of the Lord. The character-marks of the presence of God are that Christ is being "formed in us" (Gal. iv. 19). This means specifically that we are putting on His spirit of absolute good-will, of pure beneficence. The special marks are found in such traits of character as the readiness to forgive ; the desire any way and every way to live to bless ; the willingness to make all sacrifice for the realisation of another's good ; the eagerness which regards another's well-being as our own joy and satisfaction (John iv. 32) ; and an absolute consecration to the doing of God's will and the accomplishing of His work among men (John iv. 34). The marks are Christlike purity and probity, but Christlike love too. The most characteristic thing is the altruistic note. The marks include Christlike frank

simplicity and integrity—an openness towards man and God, but these as dominated by that love which is the fulfilling of every moral obligation (Rom. xiii. 10. To sum the matter, the supreme mark of the Divine presence is that the very grace of God, revealed in the spirit and character of our Lord, is upon us, and that our life has just that touch of perfectness (Matt. v. 48).

Every movement towards the ideal is a mark of God's presence. We come at Christlike character and life by slow degrees. We reproduce our Lord's image in ever greater completeness, but at best we are on the way to the goal (2 Cor. iii. 18). There is a glory not attained. Suffice it if we are passing "from glory to glory." There is no sure sign of the Divine presence but this growing Christ-likeness. There are what may be termed the preliminary stages, the stages of conviction and of penitence, but they, too, are tested by the presence or absence of the genuine movement Christward.

The fulness of Christ's indwelling is realised, according to New Testament teaching, only in the fellowship of Christian love and life. It is in the body of Christ, constituted by the saints, that the individual believer comes to the perfect faith and the full-grown manhood (Ephes. iv. 13). In the whole movement towards the ripening of Christian character, as realised in the loving society which is constituted in His Spirit, is the Christ most fully embodied. Where the fellowship is rich and mutual love is in full stream, there the common life

is instinct with His Spirit, as the body is instinct with the life of the soul (1 Cor. xii). The full, free flow of co-operative life is the distinctive sign of the one soul indwelling. Where Christ is, love is.

The other chief mark of God's presence with us is the Christlike effect of our life. To Isaiah of Babylon the sign of the redeemed life was that a new joy filled the world. "The mountains and the hills," in his poetic phrasing, "broke forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clapped their hands." The stately fir and the fragrant myrtle replaced the thorn and the brier. The sign of the gracious life was in its gracious result. He who would be sure of the indwelling of the God of Love must crave this sure sign, that Love's redeeming work through Him is wrought. The benediction of other lives is as the blessing of God.

These things being certified, and no sign being accepted of the presence of God with us but this broad moral result, it may be added that—

4. *The Presence of God is accompanied by a sense of Blessedness*

But we put this as the Master put the assurance about all needful daily supplies, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." Be sure of the indwelling of God from the Christlike good wrought in character and life, and the blessed mood will be added unto you.

To the soul at one with God in Christ, God's own

peace is given, a peace "deep as the unfathomed sea." The peace of God which surpasses all our conception of it shall stand guard over our hearts. That peace is compounded of a glorious retrospect of infinite purposes of good, pursued through countless generations, and a glorious prescience of the infinite results of redeeming love. We cannot fully enter into it. But the heart of God knows its own blessedness. At one with the Spirit of God, something of that blessedness passes into us. The mother-soul is comforted in love, and the child breathes that comfort. So "the God of all comfort" (2 Cor. i. 3) communicates to His saints a great comfortedness and sense of surety.

Similarly the life consecrated to God has the sign of the Divine response in the continuous shaping of its course. The good life is God-guided. As we have said, sometimes we must wait the time when the golden thread of Divine Providence appears. But the soul submissive to the will of God is growingly assured of God's moulding hand. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (Ps. xxxvii. 23). He is not left to his own hazardous choice. There is no infallibility, for there is no perfection in us. But God overrules all for good. We are saved from error, and kept in the way of God's commandments—enough, at least, that the Christian life is broadly given the stamp of a God-guided life. The presence of God in this way or form becomes a steady assurance.

Yet another sign is the strong influential life of

the soul in whom Christ dwells. There is something persuasive, powerfully effective, in the Christian. There is a power not himself manifestly with him. He is in line with influences behind him. The early Christians marvelled at their own power in the great work of redemption. It was this persuaded them that Christ was still with them. The power of Christ attended them. The more completely consecrated the life, the more does this loving power of God with men stream through it. We recognise the souls whom God indwells just by the sacred spell they exercise. Blessing others, blessing returns on them ; and their consciousness of Divine benediction is confirmed.

The last and greatest sign of this order is the strength of courage, fortitude, endurance, perhaps at last of martyr heroism, which is given to the Christian. This is Divine. It is a strength of moral will which is God-sustained. It is the resistent and persistent power of pure goodness. Behind the moral progress of the world there must be a faith unclouded, and a purpose of good unswerving, and in this Divine faith and purpose good souls participate.

We may be conscious of these blessed moods and assurances of the soul. They are most joy-bringing whilst they are with us. At last, however, we can only say God is in life because we are assured that moral progress is certain and the Christ will not fail. The good life is the Divinest of all creations. Because it bears that stamp we know God is in it.

Chapter XVI

DIVINE INSPIRATION AND GUIDANCE

"The grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus; that in everything ye were enriched in Him in all utterance, and all knowledge. . . . Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."—1 COR. i. 4, 5, 30.

"God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ. . . . For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, for good works."—EPHES. ii. 4, 5, 10.

"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."—1 COR. x. 13.

"Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest."—MATT. xi. 28.

"Two things fill the soul with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily one holds them in contemplation: the starry Heavens above me, and the moral Law within me. . . . The second begins its action with my invisible self, my own personality, and stations me in a world which has true infinitude . . . with which . . . I recognise myself as in a connection not merely accidental, but universal and necessary."—KANT'S Works, vol. v., p. 167.

"Duty! thou great, thou exalted name! Wondrous thought, that workest neither by fond insinuation, flattery, nor by any threat, but merely by holding up thy naked law in the soul, and so extorting for thyself always reverence, if not always obedience—before whom all appetites are dumb, however secretly they rebel—whence thy original?"—KANT'S "Metaphysics of Ethics" (Semple's Edition), p. 127.

"There are select moments in the mental history, sacred to the higher reason, when it is not so much *exerted* by us, as visited, independently of effort on our part, with wondrous illumination. It is not an elaborate, but a purely receptive, at the most a contemplative faculty."—YOUNG'S "Province of Reason," p. 318.

CHAPTER XVI

DIVINE INSPIRATION AND GUIDANCE

We have already said that the Christian religion is peculiarly the religion of the soul. We have endeavoured to show that God stands revealed in the whole upward movement of personal life, from its simplest beginnings to its present rich fulness and larger promise. We have indicated certain manifest signs that the higher progressive life of humanity to-day is being ministered from on high through the souls which lie open to God.

These are the main features of any spiritual faith, yet the very last thing believed in—even by Christians—is a real, personal soul-redemption. The effective personal influence of the personal God upon the soul may, indeed, be distantly believed in, but the belief is a dim credibility. At the most essential point of life God is barred out from His own world, according to the prevalent thought about Him. There are still those who look to philosophic wisdom to cure the world. They are still under bondage to the belief, which ancient philosophy never quite cast off, that sin is simply a form of error, and that culture and the discipline of life will drive it out. They do not perceive that holiness alone can create holiness, and that a holy passion emanating from the fountain-heart of God

and swaying the hearts of men is the only possible source of redemption. The passion among men which is born of this Divine passion is the dynamic of salvation. The Cross of Christ is the very wisdom and power of God intervening, in the supreme instance, for the redemption of men.

There are those who can believe in a real spiritual redemption, indeed, of a *past* generation. Their faith is in the power of the Christ of the first century, or perhaps of the God of Reformation days. They conclude, no doubt, that this book is not closed ; but they do not trust in redeeming power being exercised to-day ; or that power is regarded by them as distant and uncertain, operative only in some vague manner. Verily there was a God who cared for men and intervened on their behalf in those earlier days, or perhaps in the days of our later fathers, but it is difficult for many to believe in any real guidance and upholding grace in our day. It is a past redemption men ever think of. A distant influence flows to us from it. That is all. We are in the bonds of a Christian Deism. The personal saving presence has faded into a hidden historic influence.

There are those who believe in the presence of Christ in an oft-repeated miracle on the high altar ; and there are others who think of salvation as some magical and incomprehensible transformation of life for which one can only watch and wait ; yet neither think of a possible change of nature—the most profound—through personal contact with God.

Divine Inspiration and Guidance

There are many who are most insistent on that point of Evangelical faith which deals with the forgiveness of past sin, but they seem there to be stranded. Their faith in redemption almost begins and ends in a faith in One who is ever ready to forgive, and whose forgiveness certainly is ever needed. The thorough change of character in view of which the forgiveness passes is hardly anticipated.

If these things be true, it is evident that, for many, the very foundation of spiritual religion needs yet to be broadly and securely laid. Priestism on the one hand, and a certain mechanical and legal order of Evangelicalism on the other will remain in power, until Christian faith is clear that real salvation is ours to-day through the direct personal inworking of God upon the soul.

1. *It is this Divine Personal Renewal we need.* Nought less, nought else avails. We are as insistent as the Roman Catholic, in his way, that we cannot have been given great and awe-inspiring moral responsibilities to be left without adequate guidance. Only what boots it that some miracle is performed on the altar, if both Catholic and Protestant still lack a moral miracle of renewal in their own hearts? What boots it that special gifts and grace came down on the Church in the first generation, and are passed on through some official channel, if the gift of renewal and soul-rectification is not found in the innermost of one's own

being, the secret of which no father-confessor can penetrate? What boots it that, according to the Evangelical, redemption has been purchased, and forgiveness is assured to the penitent, if regeneration be not thoroughly believed in? The rectification of the inner life is after all the chief matter. If there be no real salvation there, all these other things merely mock us. Can sin's fearful damage be repaired? In spirit and aim can the soul be set again towards God and the good? These are the questions.

2. *The Soul's imperious Demands and the gracious Gift of God in Christ both declare that our deep need shall be supplied*

The confession of St. Augustine is the language of every soul which has "come to itself." "Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee." The cry of the human heart has found its full answer in Jesus Christ. He is all we want. His soul-companionship will satisfy. To come under His personal sway changes our inner life thoroughly. It is like the re-magnetisation of our souls. They are set true to Him. That all this is possible is the very heart of the Gospel, and is *the* meaning of the incarnation. There is a personal Saviour, who ever lives to incorporate His life with our own. We think of Him at once, it may be, as interceding for us in heaven. That is a figure of the mind representing His exaltation and His constant mediation on our

behalf. The enthroned is still the Redeemer. He is enthroned the more completely and victoriously to carry through the redeeming work on which His heart is fixed. His spiritual exaltation does not remove Him from us. It enthrones Him in our spiritual world. His world and ours are one.

This Gospel to the inmost soul, which Jesus is, carries with it the assurance that in all other needful things we shall have the inspiration and guidance of God. Jesus is the pledge Divine and complete. We return then to the point that, in the real needs of the soul, God meets us.

3. *There is Inspiration and Guidance to-day*

All human thought is but a re-discovery of the Divine thought as expressed in the material creation, and in life and human history, including the inner life of the soul. It is a recognition of Him, who so constituted us that we must seek Him, and find Him. In that recognition He cannot but be profoundly interested. We came out from God with the capability—our high endowment—of thus returning to Him. He awaits that consummation, watching over every step of our progress. He wistfully looks for the day of our awakened apprehension.

Inspiration is of many, or let us say of all, orders. The ancients regarded all fine artistic skill as an inspiration from on high (Ex. xxxi. 6). The skilled artificer, the man who conceived and produced a work of high art, was inspired. (We must

not there forget that the ancient workman was his own designer). The majestic figure of the Olympian Zeus by Pheidias was looked upon as one of the wonders of the world—again an inspiration of the gods. We to-day may recognise a single poem of some great writer as a work worthy the effort of a life-time. Enough to have written it and died. So too with some noble picture or piece of music. Here was not only human genius, working, it may be, in some inspired hour with comparative ease, but the quintessence of spirit was finding expression. Great souls have stood humbled before their own creations. They have felt their works were not wholly theirs ; that their part in them, indeed, was a very humble one. Their experience might be expressed by the words which Elizabeth Barrett Browning puts into the mouth of Mary, the mother of the Lord :—

> "For me, for me.
> God knows that I am feeble like the rest !
> I often wandered forth, more child than maiden,
> Among the midnight hills of Galilee,
> Whose summits looked heaven-laden,
> Listening to silence as it seemed to be
> God's voice, so soft yet strong, so fain to press
> Upon my heart, as Heaven did on the height,
> And waken up its shadows by a light,
> And show its vileness by a holiness."

If some are inclined to dismiss this as poetic conception only, then we might cast back on the authority of many great thinkers, from Plato onwards, who have spoken in one phrase or other of the light of reason. "In Thy light," said the

Psalmist, "we shall see light." It is best, however, to recall the fact that mind and its achievements have been a gradual and a growing gift to men. We must think not only of the last result deemed by its superexcellence to be the sign of Divine co-operation, but of every step which led to that. This includes the moulding of the personality, the culture of faculty, and the final inspiration for the particular achievement, which came with such gladdening, awe-inspiring and uplifting power to others. In all true work, even the humblest, there is inspiration. Nothing is meaningless or indifferent. Mind is essential to human life. All man's wonderful activities in their endless variety are but secondary to his thought. They are expressions of his personality. He who moulds life to His own ideals must here, at every step, have His hand upon us.

It is in the exercise of the idealising faculty, however, that Divine inspiration is both needed most and is most clearly witnessed. It is in the faith which he cherishes respecting God and the soul, in the recognition of the spiritual authority of the Christ, in the developing of personal character and the realisation of a growing social good that man bears clearest testimony to the Divinity which shapes him and his ends. The heightened faculty for beauty, truth, and goodness ; the exhibition of heroic courage, of patient zeal, of unselfish love ; the response of an inward loyalty, personal and whole-souled, to the high calling in Christ, pro-

claim man's relation to higher spiritual powers. He is enriched in Christ, quickened in Him, and created in Him for good works (Ephes. ii. 5, 10). The personal ideal is only realised through the ideal Person.

When we recognise that all this higher life arises from inner founts of feeling, is formed from within accordant with the secret seed-life of personality, yet that amid the sin of the world the primal human instincts need to be kept true, and the soul in its affections and passions needs to be cleansed again and again from defilement, we come upon the greatest need of inspiration. That good in any sense persists, much more that it is progressive and conquering, is proof positive of Divine guidance and personal purification or rectification.

There is one more point in life where Divine guidance is very manifest. There is a profound philosophy behind the faith expressed in Paul's words (1 Cor. x. 13): "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted, above that ye are able." Amid all the storm and stress of life, amid all its apparent disasters, amid all the devastation which sin may work, God is pledged to us to maintain for us such conditions that in moral life we shall not be overborne by sheer weight of affliction or temptation. It is difficult to prove the justness of this as a reading of life in individual histories, but the thing is as plain as the sun in the heavens as an interpretation of life on the broader scale. We may recount all the risks and see that

the maintenance of moral character is as marvellous as the preservation of some seed-life borne on the wings of a hurricane, or as the swinging of worlds in space unharmed. Morality persists. The human will has not been overborne. Personality has not been shattered. Its foundations are still on the rock of faith in life, and its superstructure is still reared by a hope unquenchable. The soul is indestructible because God-sustained.

4. *The Corporate Life of the Good is specially inspired and guided*

There is an approach to infallibility in the deepest agreement of souls, though perfection even there is never reached. We have just referred to one profound saying of the Apostle. There is another of the Master Himself touching this point which is yet more profound. He says if two agree "about what they shall pray for, whatever it is, it shall be granted them by the Heavenly Father"[1] (Matt. xviii. 19). There are points of advance on which there need be no going back—bound they are bound, loosed they are loosed. For the Master Himself presides over such holy agreeing. The truth is there can be no final resting in falsehood. The soul of man sets true in time. It cannot be completely deflected. If there is a deep secret about the individual will which makes it impossible to assert so much of the individual, it must be

[1] "Twentieth Century New Testament."

true of the race or God's moral purposes might be thwarted. It were possible for God, in that case, to lose faith in His own moral creation. But in deep and true agreement is stability. There alone the Kingdom Eternal is being constructed, but there it is immovably sure. As soul meets soul in oneness of loving purpose, vision, strength, holy enthusiasm, and an undauntable hope and faith appear. God finds His self-expression in the life of the faithful. They gain assurance of faith. They become more susceptible to the leading of the Divine Spirit. They endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

Would that there were a larger trust in this real inspiration and guidance ; in transforming and upholding grace ; in the Presence which ministers holy courage in the hour of direct need, and keeps alive the instincts of true manhood, whatever would destroy the soul ; in the power which follows us in our sinning and is our surety in life's stress and strain !

BOOK V

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DISCIPLINE

Chapter XVII

PRAYER

"One of His disciples said unto Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray.'"—LUKE xi. 1.

"Pray without ceasing!"—1 THESS. v. 17.

"In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."—PHIL. iv. 6.

"Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves, and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

TENNYSON'S "Morte d'Arthur."

"Lord what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make;
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,
What parched grounds refresh, as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all the distant and the near
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;
We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power!"

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.

CHAPTER XVII

PRAYER

ONE of the simplest of propositions lies at the very basis of this subject, namely, giving to a person implies receiving. The giving cannot be completed without the receiving. The gift is not, in that case, delivered. So, whatever be done on man's behalf, his own active co-operation is needful if the material of life is to be wrought up into his personality. Neither a high social environment, nor the grace of God operating through that and beyond it, avails anything unless it finds response in the individual soul—in emotion, cherished ideal, and holy will. The soul must lay hold of what is given to it. To all there must be the answer of aspiration and effort. Prayer, in the narrower sense, may be said to be one form in which this is expressed. In the wider sense of the word prayer includes it all. Prayer is the soul's thirst ; awakened desire ; stretching out of the hand for its satisfying good.

1. *Man is plastic in the Hands of God*

The creation is regarded by many as a finished product. Whatever be said of it, man is not. He is in the process of being created. He is an ever-new creation, being born from above. We have seen every reason, indeed, to believe that the lower

creation is no finished product. Progressive forms of its life are being raised to-day. It doth not yet appear what it shall be. There is something more of the formative spirit, imbedded in life, rising ever more into being. Higher forms of plant and animal life emerge through natural processes. By the co-operation of human ingenuity, and growing scientific knowledge, the improvement in prospect is an endless vista. Contemplate any one of the forms of the cultivated flower in our day and there is presented in it a speaking parable on this line. Think of the tulip, the pansy, the chrysanthemum ! What varieties have been raised !

But let this go. Though creation be complete, in any sense of that word, the term is entirely inapplicable to man—physically, mentally, morally. He is in the making. God is making him. Through 7,000 years of more or less conscious history, and through many more milleniums which constitute the forgotten, or but dimly-remembered childhood of the race, man has been a-making. Through stone age and iron age, through old tribal and patriarchal conditions, through forms of ancient and modern civilisation, the progress, though not unimpeded, has gone forward. There has been progress in physique and brain-power from a stage akin to that of the anthropoid ape. But there has been an infinitely more wonderful development of reason, conscience, and moral will—that is of all those qualities from which man's distinctive history springs. Of man's creation of language,

literature, science, industry, art, religion, we have already said something. Here the great story must just be recalled. Man is the creator of history; creating it, he is created.

We see that every advance in power and faculty constitutes a new temptation to a being of large discourse and wide sympathy. Every advance is a new Eden to those who are able to take advantage of it. But in every Eden there is a possible, and all too probable Fall. Our sympathies say our advantage should be widely shared; our tendencies to self-enjoyment and personal possession powerfully incline us to appropriate our blessings to selfish uses. The extension of power, which mostly means the advance of intellect, cannot proceed far without a parallel development of conscience and moral will, for power only will corrupt. Both our glory and our shame depend on the greatness of our powers. Human capacity is such that some men can manipulate millions of money, and a few —very few—gain possession of millions of acres. This large capacity is our danger. The millionaire requires more conscience than the man of humble possessions, or he is ruined. The making of man, therefore, is supremely the making of character. Without advance here, advance in other directions would be now our undoing, and has been our undoing all through our history. Progress in power, without progress in the moral qualities which should govern power, would soon spell complete ruin and bring history to an end.

2. Man must co-operate in His own Making

It is his character which is peculiarly his own. In conscious personal life there is nothing given which is not personally appropriated. Heredity may hand on many endowments, but these must be personally preserved, and they can only be preserved by being used and improved. All sorts of objects are presented to the eye, but attention must be cultivated or we cannot perceive what they are. All sorts of facts, and interpretations of them, are presented to the intellect, but in so far as the powers of apprehension and understanding are unawakened all is in vain. Learning cannot progress far on the happy-go-lucky principle of "taking what God sends you," as that saying is usually understood. God cannot bestow his most personal gifts upon us after the manner of delivering coals at our door. He must quicken and enlarge our apprehending power. He must create the desire, it may be the thirst and persistent longing for what He would bestow, otherwise His consignment of blessing can never be delivered. There is many a blessing knocks at the door, but there is as yet no one to open and take it in. The effort of the Apostle Paul, wayworn and aged with many labours and sufferings, was still to press on with all vigour if so be that he might "lay hold" of that for which he had been "laid hold of" by Christ Jesus (Phil. iii. 13). *This apprehending effort is prayer.* It is the human appropriation of Divine gifts. Even the flower

must be active, in its own way, under the sunlight, or it cannot live. All through life there must be the appropriate reaction. Prayer does not stand first in order. There is the grace of the Giver before there is the gift. The want in us is the first step in the giving of personal gifts. Our need is the expression of our nature. The natural thirst acts under appropriate stimulus. There is a fourfold giving, therefore—there is the natural capacity, there is the stimulus, there is the quickened power of appreciation and appropriation, there is the new or added bestowment. There is here the indication of our imperfection, but it may equally well be regarded as the indication of our possible perfecting. The chief point is that, in personal enrichment, God must proceed by way of inspiring our prayer. Only so can His further gifts be bestowed.

3. *The Subject suggests all the Difficulties of Freedom*

The usual dilemma may here be presented, but, unless we are mistaken, it is already vanishing. It is said, if God be all good we should not wish to change His purposes, nor could we if we wished ; but, were it possible, then the good would give way to the evil or at least the imperfect. The truth is we cannot change God's goodwill, nor can we desire, in any right spirit, to do so. But it is also true that God's goodwill cannot be done in us and through us, except as our will is actively in harmony with His—that is only in the degree that true prayer

is first inspired. The prayer brings the gift from God, but only because already God was waiting to bestow it so soon as the desire was ripened in us.

We may easily stumble again at the way in which, according to the Master's words, the Father is committed to us and our prayers. "Ask," He says, "and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." "If ye shall ask anything in My name, that will I do." The assurance is here given that the earnest seeker shall be the finder. He shall find what he seeks or something better. As Cromwell said, "To be a seeker is to be of the best sect next to a finder, and such an one shall every faithful seeker be at the end." The cry of the child-heart, being interpreted in the light of the Father's generous love, will never be more than momentarily denied; and the child will never receive *less* than he sought—always, indeed, more. The mother interprets her child not according to his petition but according to the real need which she in her wisdom knows is voiced by that petition. The blundering seeking does not involve, where wisdom reigns, a faulty satisfaction. Prayer itself is purified and ennobled by exercise. Our desires clarify by experience. Every prayer is, indeed, making towards the highest, if it only knew how to express itself. Every prayer, which is the expression of our true manhood, would be included in: "God make me the man I ought to be; help me to fulfil Thy good will while it is day, and bring me through every

danger and difficulty to the goal of life at last." Or every prayer would be fulfiled in : " Help me to obey the loyal law of love, love to Thee and love to fellow-men."

There is ever a deeper prayer of the true soul than the uttered prayer, or the desire already fashioned. This, again, as we said of another feature, may be taken as a sign of our bungling imperfectness, but equally may be taken as the sign of our possible perfecting. There is in us a groaning of the Divine Spirit which cannot be uttered.

We are always seeking for someone to voice this unutterable inward life, the soul of truth within us. The heroes of spiritual warfare have all, in some measure, been to us true sympathetic priests, knowing our needs, and in the long travail of humanity voicing the better life (Heb. v. 3), each burdened with some great petition. But the one prayer which is the truth of all our prayers is the prayer of our great High Priest, the One Pray-er who prays with us and for us—saying for us what we could not express—is He who ever liveth to make intercession for us. This is what we properly mean when we pray our prayers " in Christ's name." We link His strength with our weakness, His comprehensive sympathy and desire with our feebleness of thought, aspiration, and utterance.

There is something more, however, at the very heart of this section of our subject. It is this. We are so made that we ring true at last. This God knows when He commits Himself to us. He so

made us that we should come out right, unless we would deliberately cast life away. "The bruised reed He will not break and smoking tow He will not quench, yet will He send forth judgment to victory." The right is to accrue. Our God will see to it. "A broken and a contrite heart He will not despise." So much of truth in us, as can only weep its failure, will be honoured of God. None shall seek Him in vain.

4. *Prayer is not Petitions only*

It is much more the set of one's whole being toward God and the good. "Pray without ceasing," says the Apostle. This can mean nothing else than a continued prayerful attitude; a settled understanding between God and ourselves. Petition or even Godward aspiration cannot be with us always. The particularising of prayer may miss its comprehensiveness and oneness. It is everything in the good life. Life is prayer. "To work is to pray." Prayer includes disposition, will, activity, as well as aspiration, petition, trust. It is the spirit of life, the breath of our being. Prayer is "the soul's sincere desire," "the motion of a hidden fire," "a sigh," "the Christian's vital breath." It finds its echo in the deeps and in the heights, in the voiceless groaning, and the intercession before the throne of God. It is most simply and expressively "the upward look"; the expression of all our need and all our trust.[1]

[1] *Cf.* Montgomery's well-known hymn.

5. *Prayer widens and deepens with Growing Sympathy*

The cry of the infant child is only for food and the comforting place on a mother's breast. The boy sends forth his boyish desires, but however much they include of his own boyish wants they include, in some degree, the interests of sister and brother, parent and friend, in their scope. The youth has entered into the problems of his family's life—its struggles, its honours, its unsatisfied ambitions ; perhaps its failure, its shame. The family life is his own. As the Spirit of Christ enters into him he feels for the masses of men, for the poverty-stricken, the wayward, the unevangelised multitudes of heathendom. As he enters yet more into the mind of Christ, and sympathy is enlarged and knowledge extended, something of the world's great need may be said to echo from deep to deep of his soul. Prayer *then* is life and power exercised between the two poles of man's unutterable need and the purposes of God's unspeakable grace. Something is breathed within him of " the tenderness of Deity " and he shares in the travail of Christ. God so " prays His prayers within us." The great souls of history have been the world's intercessors. Prayer has been no small part of their work and their work has been prayer. The greater the soul, the more has his prayer included the world's needs in its scope.

6. *Prayer is the Expression of our continuous Dependence on Divine Succour*

We think our thoughts, cherish our aspirations, work our works, not of ourselves and by ourselves alone. We dare not venture on life, in the great sense of the word, except as assured of Divine guidance and help. Prayer is the breath of faith. It is the expression of our surety in God. It is the casting of ourselves upon Him, when sometimes that may be done amid weakness and fear. It is half the victory in all our struggles. It is the abandonment of fretful anxiety, and the committing of our way, in childlike simplicity, unto God. It is the free, frank utterance of the child, in the holy confidence begotten of the Father's love, telling all in His ear. There are no limits to prayer but the limits of the assurance that we are praying according to the will of God.

7. *Prayer avails beyond Ourselves according to the Measure of our own Character or Christlikeness*

Nothing is excluded from its scope that may be needful for the realisation of all good. What is called the miraculous may not be excluded. "The prayer of the righteous man availeth much" (James v. 16).

We have, at a previous point, said that personal interests are supreme in God's world. Nature, in her own way, makes for them. Everything in the natural world must be subordinate to personal well-

being. It was Jesus' faith that nothing could injure Him or hinder His work till that work was done (Luke xiii. 32). From the standpoint of His redeeming mission, His preservation was essential—the murderous wrath of a Herod notwithstanding. The solution of the vexed question of the supernatural or miraculous lies along this line. The moral issue rules life. Personal well-being absolutely determines whether this or that may be. This is the law to which every so-called law of nature is subordinate. When or where intervention with the natural may be necessary is beyond our judgment. We must wait upon the Higher Will. But that it may take place he who believes in a full redemption—body, soul, and spirit—must hold. Sin is "lawlessness." Since sin has entered into the world with all its destructive power, "instead of asking 'Is God likely to interfere with His own laws?' we should ask 'Is He not likely to restore them when interfered with?'" "To say . . . that matter is not likely to be altered in the interest of spirit, is to contradict our fundamental conception of the relative importance of the two." This is, in brief, the argument of J. R. Illingworth.[1] Many diseases are the result of evil courses or of criminal carelessness. They are not simply the outcome of an ignorance which we shall outgrow. Any assured forgiveness of the paralytic may need to include his cure (Mark ii. 10, 11). The redemp-

[1] "Divine Immanence."

tion of the drunkard means the suppression of a false physical appetite. How then may we here set limits to the action of a redeeming personality, or to the availing prayer of the good soul set upon the good of another?

8. *We come inevitably again to the greater Promises respecting united Prayer*

The deep agreement of souls approaches the surety of God's own purposes. There is no unity possible among men like their unity in prayer. Differences fade, even philosophies are submerged, when men bend in prayer. They come into the mystical unity of the spirit which is wrought out of deepest instincts. There is in us a oneness of nature, which amid all the variety of our experience, and characteristics, and language of intellectual faith, finds expression in our longings and aspirations before God. It is as though when His children prayed the Great Father wrapped them all in His embrace. To prayer under such conditions, the greatest answers are vouchsafed with joy.

Chapter XVIII

THE PRACTICE OF FAITH

"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed . . . nothing shall be impossible unto you."—MATT. xvii. 20.

"Have faith in God. . . . All things, whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them and ye shall have them."—MARK xi. 22, 24.

"Unto obedience of faith."—ROM. i. 15; xvi. 26.

"Though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the author of eternal salvation."—HEB. v. 8, 9.

"A righteousness of God by faith."—ROM. i. 17; ix. 30.

"This is the victory that hath overcome the world—our faith."—1 JOHN. v. 4.

"A practical experience of obedience to God in some cases will cost us dear: we cannot learn it but through the suffering of those things which will assuredly befal us on the account thereof. So was it with the Lord Jesus Christ." From the things He suffered "did the Lord Himself learn obedience; for by reason of them He had occasion to exercise those graces of humility, self-denial, meekness, patience, faith, which were habitually resident in His holy nature, but were not capable of the peculiar exercise intended, but by reason of His sufferings."

"To avow openly in the world, by our ways, walking, and living, with a constant public profession, that our portion or inheritance is not in it, but in things invisible, in heaven above, is an illustrious act and fruit of faith." "Faith looks on heaven as the country of believers, a glorious country, an eternal rest and habitation." "Heaven is in the bottom of the sighs and groans of all believers."—JOHN OWEN on "Hebrews," vol. iii. pp. 79, 76; vol. iv. pp. 436, 438.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PRACTICE OF FAITH

FAITH we have described as the moral response of our whole nature to the grace of God. It is the answer of our soul to God as good in all His ways. It is the source of all our higher life, the fount of our moral being. We have spoken of Christ the Lord as the chief revelation of the Father's grace, and of faith in Him and His redeeming love as the spring of Christian enthusiasm and devotion. All rising above the lower life and putting on of the spiritual is the result of God's working in us. He is the spirit of all our progress, the ideal element of our life. All is of grace ; yet all is of faith, for God's gifts must be personally appreciated and appropriated. Faith is in one aspect, therefore, a practical discipline, and from that standpoint we would now consider it.

Prayer is, as we have said, the breath of faith. There is a point, however, where faith may be transfigured. Petition may be left behind in regard to certain phases and elements of life, and we may live and work trusting in God. Faith may attain to quietness and confidence.

There is to be no restraint in the Christian's prayer. It is to be the free outpouring of the child-heart to God. Nothing should be said which casts the faintest shadow on that. Yet we may imagine

many a one pulled up in the midst of his urgent petitions with the question : " Can you not, will you not trust Me, and simply obey?—You beseech and beseech yet never seem to pause in your beseeching to ask whether you have used what has already been given." Surely the stern reproof comes to many : " Stop asking for more : use what you have."

1. *What is required of us is "the Obedience of Faith"*

It is as though God spread all His grace before us—the promise of life itself with all its natural blessings ; the gift of Christ whose love " passeth knowledge " ; His Cross and passion, the tokens of the very power of God intervening for our redemption—and said : " Now your answer, the full answer of your heart and life, your loyal obedience —give Me that." It is the answer of our heart, and soul, and strength ; of our affection, mind, and will to all God's grace, in all the fulness of its meaning for our life, which is the holy discipline to which we are called. It is the way the Master went.

The obedience required is truly an " obedience *of faith*." We cannot attain to it save by a trust in the faithfulness of Him who has called us. The holy calling itself would daunt us, were it not that in very love we have been called. But we still should not venture were it not that the personal power of One who is all we seek to be is pledged to us in Jesus.

It is truly an obedience *of faith* that is required,

in this sense also, that we must work for the unseen good—the good which is only assured to us by faith. This is the great note of the progressive life. It is ever seeking after something "not seen as yet." It is a pilgrim-life. The country desired is a "heavenly country." The city of the seekers for the ideal is an "eternal city"—nothing less will satisfy. But at every stage they die in faith. The unseen good is sure but only because God is sure. He made us. We could not be what we are and fail of life's reward (Heb. xi. 6). Promise is in our very being. Faith is the beginning in us of things yet to be. It is the real which has in it the promise of the ideal. It is the substance of things hoped for. And God says: "Trust Me for what is beyond sight—for what eye has not seen nor ear heard, but what has yet been revealed through the Spirit."

God recalls all His grace, reminds us of His promises to the soul, and says: "Now obey; launch out on the ocean highways of life. Venture and leave the issue with Me. It is Mine to see you through. Yours 'not to reason why; yours but to do and,' if need be, 'die.'" His grace is such, His assurances in Christ have been such, that He asks now implicit obedience. Again, as perhaps our weak hearts would put in certain pleas, we hear the strong, stern, but loving call, "Obey."

The word runs through and includes the whole round of duties. Every duty is to be fulfilled not as a matter of bare right, but as part of the answer

of our hearts unto God. It is in this sense that what is not of faith is sin. God's goodness and fidelity are such that nothing short of the fullest and most perfect obedience we can render is worthy of Him. He asks of us a life accordant with His own good and perfect will, as our only "reasonable service."

2. *By Faith we are to take on the very Character of God*

Endowed with the gifts of manhood, we might have been left to ourselves. It is the definite belief of some that that is the fact. They look for a righteousness, individual and social, which is the slow result of our own toilsome progress. There are many more whose belief, if challenged, would be quite differently declared. But, in practice, even these live and work as if no touch of God were possible. He exists; the end is assured through Him; but in life they do not know Him.

The Christian conception of God is of One who helps. He is personally with us; intimate with life. That is the meaning of the Incarnation. In Christ there is a personal holy life which is come to seek and to save us. In Him the personal holy will of God is expressing itself in human life and character. The Word is become Flesh. He is full of grace and truth, and of His fulness we receive, who receive Him (John i. 16, 17). Here is, as Paul phrases it, a Divine righteousness, which may become ours by faith (Rom. i. 17). Here is not the slowly perfecting ideal, perfecting itself from beneath; but the perfect ideal, and that in real

form, come down to us from above. The Divine gift is the gift of Jesus, the already perfect human character. This character is to be appropriated by faith ; that is, it is to become ours by the enthusiasm of a loving response and loyal yielding to this personal Saviour. As one person wholly sways another by his noble influence, and his character passes over to the one who yields to him, so, here, salvation is just this Divine alchemy of the good soul transforming another. The true character is thus to be appropriated by the passions of a confiding love. The discipline we are called to is simply this discipline of faith. If we may venture so to put it, at each stage we are not painfully to strive more, but gratefully to love more. God gives Himself to us. We are to joy in Him. So we are to become His children indeed and put on His generous, forgiving, redeeming character. The righteousness of God and of the Christian is not justice, but love. It confers benefits and delights so to do (Matt. v. 44, 45). Face to face with God's love in Christ, we reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord and are transformed into the same image from glory to glory (2 Cor. iii. 18), as playing on a violin is said to change the very wood into more musical wood.

3. *By Faith we are to work the Works of God, and adopt His outlook—the outlook of His own faith*

The great work of God is building the City Eternal ; it is realising the brotherhood of souls in earth and Heaven ; it is constituting the rich

fellowship of co-operative life, in which the unity corresponds to the deep spiritual oneness of Father and Son in the Godhead (John xvii. 22). We toil on and are often disheartened and dismayed. We see the forces of evil gather and we fear for the result. We see much good work, the result of long patience and earnest devotion, apparently brought to utter ruin. Even States and civilisations have passed away. We need, however, to gain the long view of things ; and our view is never long enough to include the " far-off divine event," until we look into the heart of God through the revelation in Jesus, and until we realise the power of world-salvation which there comes to light, rising as from the inner heart of things. God Himself has faith in the outcome. He evidently knows the way He takes. " By faith we understand the worlds were framed." His pledge and surety is in His Son.

From a faith morally based, which stakes all on the character of God, we are to assay the highest tasks in God's name, and labour on in patience and hope, assured for our part that the kingdoms of error and darkness shall fall, and the Christ-Spirit shall reign. By faith in the Living Christ we are to be strong to do His will ; working those " greater works " of which He spoke. Faith, it is ever to be remembered, is, in such case, but the condition of His own life being incorporated with ours. " He worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure." When the powers of evil loom up in appalling vastness He is our Days-man ; when

the great and glorious future seems all too glorious to be achieved, in any manner, through us, He is our Gracious Surety. During sin's long night He has been the Bright and Morning Star.

4. *The Life of Faith is distinguished by certain outstanding Characteristics*

Faith exhibits fearless courage. It dares all things, for it believes all things. There is something in the moral groundwork of faith which bespeaks the Eternal. We build on moral foundations as on the bedrock of eternal life. Hence faith has in it buoyancy, strength, fearlessness of attack. There is nothing where the moral mandate is given which is too great to be attempted. There is, in like manner, a persistency in the pursuit of its "destined end or way"; and a patient endurance, even to martyrdom, in all the life of faith. This is the miracle of history—the undauntable pursuit of the ideal, the maintenance of the soul's courage. The persistency of evil has not been greater than this persistency of the good. There is a dogged obstinacy of the soul, most perplexing to those who fain would suppress conscience, and live without restraint. The faggot has not been able to burn this out; generations of oppression do not kill it. The spirit of a people is crushed beneath the heel of tyranny, but it finds—it creates—a spokesman, clears the ground, makes sometimes one wild rush of revolution. Only it will not be suppressed. There may be an age of decadence and growing corruption, but the soul

wearies of unheroic ease and sickens at debauchery. It must regain itself. So hope "rises eternal in the human breast." The ideal conquers. Spirit counts for more than flesh, faith for more than reason, the upper environment for more than the lower. At last contact with God tones up the soul again. There is no other explanation of the unfailing progress which, with all discounting drawbacks, characterises life. Faith is essentially a principle of progress. Every point won is vantage for the gaining of some further point; every attainment reaches out to another. Life in faith is eternally progressive.

5. *The Victory in Life is the Victory of Faith*

"This is the victory"—"our faith," said the Apostle. Difficulties vanish; for life gains masterful power through faith. The arm of faith is linked with omnipotence. "If ye have faith"—but a tiny speck—"as of a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." So said the Master; and no bald literalism interprets Him. There may be no moral reason for the removal of the physical mountain; but mountains of hindrance to moral movements are cleared away. Rock-walls of prejudice, powerful social and economic combinations, are broken through. According to the glorious metaphor of Isaiah, mountains are threshed and beaten small, and the hills are made as chaff, which the whirlwind

scatters, before God's chosen instruments of life and blessing. "Fear thou not," says Jehovah to his servant, "for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee." That promise history verifies. We believe in the irresistibleness of the right. He who represents it—though he be but one—may say: "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear." God pledges Himself to us in our own soul's faith; for the truth of the soul is the truth of God. He stands by His own. Our loyal devotion, our implicit and trustful obedience are the conditions of His eternal might and wisdom being linked with us in all we attempt in His name. He is our surety of victory. On the path of truth and goodness, where the soul may give itself without reserve, the future is ours, for God is ours. In some heroic deeds it has seemed to some as if, for the time, they possessed the strength of ten. That is, indeed, but a feeble representation of the truth. By faith the human will and power are put in line with the Divine. The stars in their courses may fight against Siseras; but the powers of the universe are with Jesus. Goodness cannot fail; no! not in any one of its forms, the humblest or the highest.

Oh that men would receive the message of God's grace, and with bounding confidence enter into life to pursue its ideal ends without fear! It is not as though the world and history were bereft. God is in them. So faith, the faith which is already victory, may be ours.

Chapter XIX

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."—MICAH vi. 8.

"Let not mercy and truth forsake thee."—PROV. iii. 3.

"I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."—MATT. v. 20.

"Owe no man anything, save to love one another."—ROM. xiii. 8.

"For the whole law is fulfilled in one word—in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—GAL. v. 14.

"Be inspired with the belief that life is a great and noble calling, not a mean and grovelling thing that we are to shuffle through as we can, but an elevated and lofty destiny."—GLADSTONE quoted in MORLEY'S "Life of Gladstone," vol. i. p. 184.

"If a poor man, or one of a mean family, or a stranger, comes among you, whether he be old or young, and there be no place, the deacon shall find a place for even these, and with all his heart; that, instead of accepting persons before men, his ministration toward God may be well-pleasing. The very same thing let the deaconess do to those women, whether poor or rich, that come unto them."—APOST. CONSTITUTIONS, ii. 58.

"Christianity has in very deed brought liberty upon the earth; justice toward the oppressed; respect for the unfortunate; in a word, that equality before God, of which equality before the law is only an imperfect image."—MME. DE STAËL, "Considérations sur la Révolution Française"—Oeuvres, Tome iii. pp. 379, 380.

CHAPTER XIX

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

Is there anything new to be said on the subject of Christian character? It would seem on the first blush that that could not be. The truth is rather that the whole matter needs to be looked at again, reapprehended, and reset in the light of modern life and conditions. As though with the eyes of morning, in the freshness of a new day, we should ask what does Christian life practically mean in our generation. Older schemes of morality have their hold upon us. Christian enough they were, for their time ; but the new day brings new duty.

There is always a world of difference between the spirit of the religious and the non-religious, not to say irreligious, man. Life, with him, in all its aspects is something more than "of the world, worldly." It has height, depth, length and breadth in it. It is lifted out of narrowness, and is regarded continually as having some relation to God and eternal issues. Pre-eminently is this true of the Christian's life.

1. *Christian Character, on the Godward Side of Life, should present the perfect Type*

Man has occupied all kinds of relationship to his God, according to all the varied stages of his development. He has stood in awe and tremulous fear of the forces of Nature around him. His chief

care has been to propitiate and win the favour of his God. He has swayed between the merry life of the child playing in the sunshine of the world, and the paralysing fear of unknown dangers in clouded days. He has come, by-and-bye, to the recognition of some wide Providence, both in Nature and personal life, working ever for good. He has gathered such trust in an overruling Beneficence that faith has remained steadfast in the midst of disaster. He has then come to see God in the full light of the Christian revelation—all His loving kindnesses and tender mercies crowned in Jesus the Redeeming One. The inner meaning of life at last stands expressed in the Christ. He is centre and soul of creation. In Him the Father-God is known. So from cringing fear, shot with periods of simple-hearted joy, man has passed to free and frank trust in God. As son, he with open face looks into the face of the Heavenly Father, all his soul going out towards Him who is Love. And this follows: the God who is by nature redemptive, who is all for His children, produces in them refinements of character. Towards God the Christian exhibits tender reverence, loving trustfulness, implicit and joyful obedience, and these in their noblest forms.

2. *Christian Character, on the manward Side, should present the perfect Type*

(1) Again, all kinds of relationship have existed betwixt man and man. We have passed from a

rude Communal equality—the equality of the herd under its leader, of the family under its patriarchal head, of the tribe under its chief—through Feudal lordship and servitude, up to Modern Democracy. Our great man has successively been the warrior whose virtue lay in a daring which took little account of danger, and in the strength of the right arm ; the man of wide domains and superior culture ; and the millionaire manufacturer. There is yet coming the day in which our great one, the chief product of our life, will be the musician, the poet, the painter, the sculptor, the preacher, the *tittérateur*, the philanthropist — the man of ideas and ideals. Science will not be pursued chiefly for its material value, but as a prime source of reverent admiration and worship ; for the sake of joy in the world and God. The common man has passed from being the chattel of his fellow, capable of being bought and sold in the market, or done to death by his master none daring to call the deed in question ; to being the free citizen, sharing in the regal powers of a common citizenship, and claiming equality of opportunity. The meanest savage, we have come to acknowledge, is crown of the creative process. Life in all its lower grades was for his sake. He exhibits in himself the world-process in miniature. Every single soul is sharer in that humanity which has made history with its succession of cities, civilizations, religions, arts and sciences. The poorest creature is child of a glorious race, which has had its seers and statesmen ;

its poets and prophets ; its philanthropists and saviours from sin ; as well as those who, by dint of labour and endurance, often reaching to heroism, have won from the world its material wealth. He shares in that order of manhood. But each one, we have learned, was born for high fellowship, and is the object of redeeming love. Some human love is spent on him, but Heaven broods over him. *For him Christ died.* He was made to be Christlike.

(2) If this be something of the measure of a man, according to the Christian conception of him, can any system of jurisprudence define his rights? Rights ! There can be no talk of rights, where the whole system of things is one of grace. What is ours, is ours by the gift of God. The world is a gift ; our place and opportunity in it is a gift ; our life is a gift. All we have we owe. The will of the Giver must be regarded in the use of the gift ; and God's will, as we know it, is the common weal, the good of every soul. No system of justice so-called meets the case. We boast of our British honesty. God grant we may never fail to make it our boast ; but it does not carry us far. " Except your righteousness," said Jesus, " exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." The righteousness here referred to was the most scrupulous and finicking observance of the legal code. Except our righteousness, in like manner, pass entirely beyond what is included in British honesty, as popularly understood, we have not entered upon the

plane of Christian living. We need a modern application of the story of the Good Samaritan. The lawyer to whom the story was told was wishing to stand upon what could be demanded of him, though he probably wished to give the narrowest interpretation, too, to the word "neighbour." Jesus' answer, embodied in his story, however, touches the first of these points, and in effect says: "The question of morality is not one of established right at all, but one of gracious service. Whom can you serve and bless? He is your neighbour." Said the great Apostle: There is "a righteousness of God," which may be yours by faith—by loyal response of your soul to that revelation which unfolds God's own character (Rom. i. 17). But what then is the character of God's righteousness? It is wholly governed by grace. The Son of God is chief of those who serve. Says Shakespeare:—

> "Mercy is above this sceptred sway [of earthly kings];
> It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
> It is an attribute to God Himself;
> And earthly power doth then show likest God's,
> When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
> Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
> That, in the course of justice, none of us
> Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
> And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
> The deeds of mercy."

Mercy must not only mitigate the plea of justice, but wholly season it—govern it. The weal of others is our business, and to be sought by us without calculating cost.

But suppose we turn to "rights." The rights of

a man are not those of a superior machine, or of the paragon of animals, but the rights of a soul of immeasurable possibilities, of inestimable worth. The rights of such an one are measurable only by all the good earth and Heaven can bestow. His rights are included in the one right to be all it is in him to be.

(3) Christian morality pivots then on quite another point from the ordinary morality of the world. It passes beyond all legal demands. There must be, no doubt, laws of property, and rights of all kinds, on the lower plane, between man and man—as *e.g.*, rights of employer and employed. But Christian morality passes beyond everything touching this whole scheme of things. It asks how great good we can confer on others ; how life may be made altogether serviceable ; how every vantage point may be utilised for the common weal. We are not making a beginning with distinctively Christian character until we judge of life's success from these standpoints. The governing factor of life is that the Creative Spirit, from whom it derives, is characterised by free-handed goodness — by grace. There is no essential right of the creature over against the Creator. Life begins and continues in an act of grace. Life in men, therefore, must be of the same spirit.

(4) We see that a new and a higher civilization than any which has yet been waits to be realised on this basis. We begin low down recognising the right of brute power to satisfy its desires—this only

modified by the mother-instinct and the feeling of blood-relationship. We end in the recognition that God hath made "of one" (not blood but nature) "every nation of men"—the nature, namely, that seeks after fellowship with God (Acts xvii. 26). The oneness of nature implies likeness of destiny. God's purpose with every soul is similar. His love of every soul is the same. He awaits a system of human life which shall correspond to His Spirit. The conflict to-day is between individualism and Socialism —which shall be the ruling principle in the next great social advance. It is already plain to some that whilst the socialising of some forms of wealth, and of the production of wealth, beyond what obtains to-day is sure, there can be no more than a momentary repression of individual enterprise or limitation of individual opportunity. This, then, always means the possibility of individual aggression. It is also plain that a selfish Socialism is possible as well as a selfish individualism. You may have a social state in which the spirit is too envious and mean to recognise ability ; or you may have a social system in which "bossism" is paramount. Our real social problem is a more difficult one than that suggested by these points of discussion. It is nothing less than the production of a dominating spirit of gracious manhood, and a common life in which love of *men* as men shall determine all our questions of equity. Without this spirit we cannot have the organism which should embody it. Are we yet at the standpoint where life

for service, life for the sake of the good that may be wrought, is recognised as the only true life? Do even Christians acknowledge that life must be all grace?

There is, without doubt, much generous service of others, and much activity in the beneficent and redeeming spirit, but it is too often a veneer upon a groundwork of legalised self-aggrandisement. It is something like six days on the system of law and one on the system of grace. Our problem is to charge life in every sphere with the spirit of grace. Not a few Christian souls seek to do this, but mostly under difficulties.

(5) Christian character has, nevertheless, greatly transformed and ennobled life, and wherever it is found it exhibits distinctive traits of its own. It is wrought in men by every influence in life and every discipline through which the goodness of God is recognised. It is that in us which is likest God Himself, the impress of His own nature. It is specially the creation of His grace toward us in Jesus Christ. It is Christ reproduced in the special personal form of each individual life. The individual accent is not only not suppressed, it is everywhere employed to the utmost, so that the Christ-Spirit, through Christian characters, takes on all the language of the human spirit in all its variety. Every Christian individual is a new refraction of the light divine. But everywhere Christian character is marked by a fine sense of personal honour—a tender regard for the possibilities in every brother-soul. It is

marked, indeed, by an ardent desire that everyone should come to his own, find his full opportunity in life, and in every way achieve his manhood. This is summed up in saying that the outstanding feature of Christian character is a love of souls. There follows a self-abandoning devotion to the common weal, and labour in the interests of others. This again has led to a certain detachment from the world, which has sometimes taken the form of voluntary poverty, but may equally take the form of an unselfish use of riches, if riches fall to one. There is no virtue in poverty as such. Poverty is Christian, when not even the need for the abandonment of this world's goods will keep you from doing the utmost good, if that is the way for you. The Christian element is the recognition that your blessing in life—be it riches, personal capacity, or position—is not for personal exaltation, but for beneficent use. The Christian's concentration on the soul's good—on life's eternal values—has given rise to another form of detachment from the world, namely, a supreme regard for the inner life. This has meant a genuine fidelity towards man and God, a frankness and honesty of spirit, an emphasis on motive or the real intention of an act—what Matthew Arnold called "inwardness"—and a watchfulness over the inner springs of conduct. And it has, at last, meant that the Christian has felt himself, at all times, humbly dependent on the Spirit of God for the forming and sustaining of this

marked, indeed, by an ardent desire that everyone

genuinely gracious and unselfish spirit. There is a regard for the inner life which is of quite another aspect.

The dominant note of Christian character is love. It is love towards the God of Love, and a consequent purity, which is the furthest remove from sanctity by rule. It is love towards men issuing in all forms of practical charity.

Who would not desire to participate in this royal manhood, whose kingliness is in its kindness, whose grace is born of the grace of God Himself?

Chapter XX

HOLINESS

"And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 THESS. v. 23.

"I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."—ROM. xii. 1.

"You hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh, through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreproveable before Him."—COL. i. 22.

"That ye may present every man perfect in Christ."—COL. i. 28.

"The doctrine of 'Sinless Perfection' he believed to be indefensible. Those who asserted with confidence that they had been delivered from the power of evil did not venture to claim a complete and perfect knowledge of moral duty; they admitted that unattained heights of spiritual achievement still lay before them. But while a man is still liable to sin through ignorance, how can he be accounted perfect? And so long as growth in grace remains possible, how can it be determined what measure of defect involves no guilt? The doctrine of 'Entire Consecration' was less open to objection; but when closely examined it proved unsatisfactory."—"Life of R. W. Dale," by his Son, p. 330.

"The holiness of sinners and angels which you seem to compare differs, not only in degree but also in kind. A hare or a greyhound can run swiftly, but they cannot fly like an eagle. Had they been made to fly they would have had wings. We hope to be as the angels before long, but at present in our compound state of spirit and matter, the distinction between them and us is no less real than between birds and beasts. The holiness of a sinner consists chiefly of low thoughts of self, and high thoughts of the Saviour. These will always be in proportion."—"Letters of John Newton," edited by BULL, p. 367.

CHAPTER XX

HOLINESS

THERE is a shyness among many noble-minded Christians in reference to the subject of holiness. They would refrain from too large professions. And since there is a certain profession attached to every standard of life proposed for oneself, there is a fear to set the standard too high. They would "speak lown," as the Scotch say, and be humble. Each one feels himself "feeble like the rest." Those who refrain from vows still feel there is an implicit pledge in high aims which are entertained. Life must be consistent; and pledges are entered into willy-nilly. It is felt that to have assayed some high standard of life and to have failed, is worse than to have refrained from definitely proposing that to oneself. The failure brings disgrace on the Christian name. Those we speak of do not quite abandon the high standard, but they prefer to creep along humbly and to steadily mark progress. They even moderate the ardour and zeal of to-day, fearing lest they should not be able to live up to their own standard to-morrow. Some, too, fear that zeal may border on foolhardiness, and that, aspiring too high, they may, according to Mrs. Browning's phrase, "topple over on the other side."

There is little here of that buoyant confidence which characterised the first generation of Christians. They knew their weakness, and they knew how sin abounded and defiled their environment ; but they believed that grace abounded yet more, and that redeeming love could secure for them in personal character and life what they could not secure for themselves. Our God may understand our humble self-discounting, but surely wishes often that timidity might lose itself in simple-hearted trust. The fear which is so humble is too self-centred.

Life is for God. We are God's—wholly His, as He graciously is ours. His offspring, we derive all life's good from Him. We are His by the Love which humbles itself to claim us simply for love's sake. " We are not our own ; we are bought with a price."

The " saint " is not, in the first instance, named saint as possessing holy perfection, but as the " called one " of God. He is claimed of God, for God's service. He only fulfils this high calling or destiny as he is " set apart " to God and the high ends of life which are God's. Any other use of life is a desecration (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17). Here the first question is not about our choice at all, but about the Divine appointment. We are God's.

Then " sainthood " should be cleared of special association with cloistered virtue, or a life of perpetual devotion. These do not represent all of life —at best, only phases of life. Sainthood has its

humane side. We are called to that holiness which is wholeness of consecration to human well-being. The proclamation of the new dispensation is the reverse of that of the old. Our God is *not* a jealous God. The love we would spend on Him He bids us spend on His children. We are called to the love of those whom God loves ; and to the service of those, whom serving, God is served. Catholicism has frequently done to Christian life the great wrong of divorcing the Godward and manward sides of religion ; and has laid almost exclusive emphasis on the life of contemplation and self-discipline. The soul sanctified is for sanctified uses.

The fear of aiming at sainthood, or holiness, arises from too slight a view of God's loving claims, or too mawkish a view of the life of consecration.

1. *We are called to a Life of rounded Completeness*

The Christian life, at its best, is rich and full, like a garden in glorious bloom, or a landscape whose varied beauty fills the eye and ravishes the poetic sense. We may think of this life as rich with the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance (Gal. v. 22) ; or as preoccupied with the things that are true, honourable, just, pure, lovely and gracious (Phil. iv. 4). It is the whole life maintained in its wholeness—body, soul, and spirit. It is the moral character and will, the natural affections and tendencies, and even the physical appetites and powers made contributive to life's ideal.

It is the whole of these in such exercise as to be "at attention"—alert for the Master's appearing (1 Thess. v. 23). It is life of the noblest type; strong, healthful, large-hearted; grace for grace reproducing the rounded completeness of the Master's life (John i. 16). It is life so rich and full that every grace adds to the charm and fine influence of every other. It is the life which, in loved ones, is the satisfaction and joy of those who know its companionship.

But Christian life, at its best, is increasingly steadfast. It is not unvarying, but its variations are on the higher scale, and its relative failures are but occasions for more resolution and an energy more completely braced to high duty. It knows no great declensions. If declensions there should be they are no more than momentary. "When my feet stumble, to Thee I'll cry." Life is not lifted above weakness and weariness, and possible error, but it keeps climbing the upper heights; it remains faithful and has ever the "excelsior" note ringing through it.

Christian life is making for permanency. We are entering into the life which is immovably sure. The issue of true life is spoken of as "eternal life," but the perpetuity and lastingness are not added on. The durability lies in the quality of the life. We can enter into eternal life only as we are entering into the character which is assured and permanent. Our God seeks to produce in Christlike souls His higher creation—something more per-

manent than the stars of heaven. These celestial bodies are bound into one great system by the power of gravitation. The system approaches to a time-expression of the eternal. It is one, that is, in which time becomes almost timeless. The planets swing in their orbits and the stars move in their courses through ages uncountable. Worlds may, however, pass away ; but, in the character which God would fashion in us, He is producing the life which shall remain, the Kingdom which cannot fail.

2. *The Christian is called to the perfect Life; to share strenuously in Life of the perfect Sort*

Many foolish things have been said and written on the subject of Christian perfection ; but no one need be afraid of approaching it through the gateway of the New Testament exposition.[1] That is quite sane. Briefly, there are three standpoints from which it is regarded. (1) There is life of a perfect kind and we may share it in our own degree. This, indeed, is the summary statement of Christian salvation. We are called to participation in the very life of God. The specific character of this life is love ; it is pure beneficence ; it is love of the loveless ; it is

> " Love to the loveless shown
> That they might lovely be."

The Christian is to share this kind of life. " Ye shall be perfect as your Heavenly Father is per-

[1] *Cf.* "The First Christians," by the present author.

fect" (Matt. v. 48). There is no Christian life and character without some share in this perfection of life, which is love. Good-will, of the self-abandoning sort, which counts no sacrifice in service, is kin to the life of God, and so participates in the perfectness of God's life. (2) Then life may have perfection in its several stages. There is a beauty of child-life; there is freshness of spiritual ardour in youth or maiden; there is the power of endurance and strenuous achievement in the years of strength; there is the mellowness of character which comes only with years. Each of these exhibits a perfectness of its kind. We would not lose any one of them. Of children, Jesus said: "Of such is the Kingdom." Of the rich young ruler it is said, "Jesus looking upon him loved him." Talents may vary, but each may earn the Master's "Well done!" (3) Further, there is a perfectness in striving after the perfect. Paul, the Apostle of arduous campaigns, heroic in his endurance (2 Cor. vi. 3—10), pre-eminent in self-discipline (Rom. vii. 24), is, at about sixty years of age, "not already made perfect," but is exhibiting a perfection in the manner in which he is pressing on toward the goal of life, "towards the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 13, 14). He immediately refers to this (Phil. iii. 15) as a kind of perfection, perhaps half unconsciously, in his phrase: "Let us, as many as be perfect."

The Christian then is called to the perfect life—

perfect in its kind, perfect in its stage, perfect in the strenuousness with which the ultimate perfection is pursued. Such whole-souledness brings rest at every stage in the progress.

But perfection in the full sense, even as relative to human life and present ideals, is not an individual possibility. As the present writer has said elsewhere : "The perfecting goes on in the whole body of believers and perfection is only attained in and with the perfecting of all. We are members one of another. We must accept that relation with all its enriching and sometimes limiting significance. Co-operative union with one another in love, as well as union with Christ our Head, is a necessary condition of any perfect Christian life. The complex laws of growth here operate." [1]

3. *This high Life is only possible by Grace on the one hand, by Faith on the other*

It is a Divine creation. The energy of God put forth for human redemption and perfecting is in the Gospel of His Son (Rom. i. 16). The holy character of God working for love's great ends is there manifest. The righteousness of God is there fulfilling its own faithful mission. Christ—and Christ crucified—is the very passion of this power (1 Cor. i. 24) ; is, indeed, God doing His utmost in His own supreme work. Very God is there in a deeper sense than He is in all creation ; He is

[1] "The First Christians," p. 44.

there seeking to reproduce in men His own character and nature. The dynamic of God is the Cross of Christ.

The surety of man's character lies in the character of God. God seeks in men character akin to His own. His all is pledged to the realisation of that. It is not doubtful. He stands revealed in His redeeming activity. He is holy and loving, good and true. When the eternal faithfulness of God is answered by the faithful response of the human heart, the character divine in man is already in full course of production. According to the Pauline metaphor, if we may revert to it again, we reflect, as a mirror, the glory of the Lord, and are transformed into likeness to the Master, passing from glory to glory (2 Cor. iii. 18). The old-world mirror was but partially polished, at times, and it could soon rust. The influence of God's grace upon us is such that the mirror—our personal character, of which the open face is the expression, is polished and further polished, until the face of Christ looks in, seeing the answering face—the character which, in every lineament, is correspondent with His own. But the realisation of this is not with ourselves, or those fears we spoke of, at an earlier point, would be fully justified. God Himself is at work upon us. The character and perfecting of His work in us are guaranteed in the person and redeeming passion of Jesus Christ. The faithfulness of our God is the bedrock of all our hope.

4. *It is the Office of the Holy Spirit to apply the Character and Work of Christ to our souls*

He quickens the apprehension of all that our Lord is and may be to us, so that He may dwell in us in the fulness of His power (Ephes. iii. 16—19). The Spirit awakens our every susceptibility so that we may take in Christ, who alone is "the hope of glory"—the hope of our perfecting (Col. i. 27—29). The measure of the manhood to which we are called is nothing less than "the fulness of Christ" (Ephes. iv. 13). The dynamic of our perfecting, as said, is the Cross. By the Cross appeal is made to the human heart—appeal as of the searching love of God. If aught may produce a steadfast fidelity, or swiftly recall from wandering, it is this. The gracious personal influence of Jesus comes with all the persuasion of His passion in it; and, by that, holiness of character is wrought in us. By the sacred enthusiasm He evokes men become capable of high and holy endeavour. Grace for grace the human character is refined and ennobled by touch of the Spirit of Christ. The soul puts on Christ; is devoted to Him; and lives ever to "perfect holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1). The purifying and quickening influence of the Spirit, if unquenched, secures that we shall be alive to all this.

5. *There is still the Need of Personal Discipline*

The discipline takes the form of an ever more complete and strenuous devotion to the Master's

will. There is no virtue in penances. Hacking the body and limiting its power are not ways to perfect life. The lengthened vigil is not good. The healthful Christian will certainly bring his body into subjection and make it the servant of the higher life (1 Cor. ix. 27). But his discipline had better be found in the ways of healthful activity. Discipline, when it becomes another form of self-centredness, is itself morbid and unhealthy. All good in us has its spring in the heart's response to Divine grace—in faith. Life should be all gratitude and devotion. To this, and as part of it, we are to take all care to add every quality which can make our life a joy and blessing; and we are to be wise, self-controlled, patient, filial, and brotherly (2 Pet. i. 5—7). The highest and holiest incentive is still the winsome character of our Lord and His whole-souled devotion to us. He seeks in us a nature and character corresponding to His own. For this, and this alone, He made sacrifice of Himself, entered into our life, and spent His love upon us. For this He still makes Himself one with us.

> "Then, Jesus, be Thy Spirit ours,
> And swift our feet shall move
> To deeds of pure self-sacrifice
> And the sweet tasks of love."

Our self-discipline must not remove us from Christ. We must not forget His intimate sympathy with us in all efforts for self-mastery. Better were it to think continually of subjecting ourselves to Him. If the Cross of Jesus may not master us, our

patience will soon be exhausted, our hope of ourselves and our love of others will soon fail. If only we live for love, for love we may continue to yield heart and will, every power and possession, to Him in consecration. But only so. The soul of Christian discipline is loving devotion.

Chapter XXI

THE PASSION FOR SOULS

"The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost."—LUKE xix. 10.

"What man of you . . . doth not . . . go after that which is lost, until he find it!"—LUKE xv. 4.

"It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."—MATT. xviii. 14.

"The love of Christ constraineth us. . . . We are ambassadors on behalf of Christ. . . . We beseech you . . . be ye reconciled to God."—2 COR. v. 14, 20.

"I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake."—ROM. ix. 2.

"He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied."—ISA. liii. 11.

"Oh, if we could make this missionary problem a personal one, if we could fill the hearts of the people with a personal love for the Saviour who died for them, the indifference of Christendom would disappear, and the kingdom of Christ would appear."—Motto of ANDREW MURRAY'S "Key to the Missionary Problem."

The oft-told story of Zinzendorf's arrest by the picture—"Ecce Homo"—of Sternberg, with the words underneath:

> "All this I did for thee,
> What hast thou done for Me?"

is repeated in the book just quoted, and it is said of Zinzendorf: "What marked him above everything was a tender, childlike, passionate love to our Lord Jesus. Jesus Christ, the Origin and Inspirer of all mission work, possessed him. The dying love of the Lamb of God had won and filled his heart; the love which had brought Christ to die for sinners had come into his life; he could live for nothing else, but to live, and, if need be, die for them too."—*Ibid.*, p. 57.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PASSION FOR SOULS

THE religion of Jesus is marked by two great distinctive features which make it incomparable. The one is its full and confident hope of universal redemption. The other is the passion with which it inspires the faithful to spend and be spent for the saving of even the most abandoned and sin-corrupted among men—the saving of them to holy life and perfect Christlikeness.

Faith and life are vitally related, but if we may distinguish these in the supreme case of our Master, then His greatness lay not in the truth He taught, sublime as it was, but in the Redeeming Life He lived. The greatest truths of His religion were only seen in their full significance when interpreted in the light of His death. His passion revealed God—the very heart of God—and man's eternal value.

But the revelation is, by no means, the chief thing. That is incidental to the redeeming passion and life. Our Master was pre-eminently the Redeemer. The Cross reveals Him. There the power of His life is put forth to the uttermost. He spent Himself, in the spirit of His Cross, to save men. He patiently sought individual souls—a Magdalene, a Peter—with a love which would not be denied—sought "till He found." He loved His

city and nation with a spirit of brooding passion and great longing for the realisation of the prophetic ideal concerning them. He wept for the blindness of His people. But His devotion was never confined within national limits. It was moral. He sought the least, the sin-destroyed, those most needing His love. His soul's desire was to win mankind and establish a new covenant-relation between man and God. The burden He carried for one here and another there widened until a world-travail echoed in His soul from deep to deep.

The saving spirit of the Master passed to His followers. His love constrained them and begat a great love in them. Paul could wish himself "anathema" for his kinsmen, his nation. He is in travail until Christ be formed in his converts (Gal. iv. 19). This spirit which could spend itself in seeking others' well-being and count no cost in the service of their higher life became the characteristic of early Christians. It was this love of theirs which won upon the world and achieved the first Christian conquests. The world stood in reverent awe of that love which, with such self-abandonment, could devote itself to making saints of slaves. The spirit of early Christianity was this all-absorbing desire that men everywhere, of every nation, grade, status, or moral condition, should come into the freedom of holy childlike fellowship with God, into daily walk with God in constant trustfulness, into the very life which was in Christ.

The Passion for Souls

This redeeming passion is still the distinctive note of the Christian religion. The Christian faith —its system of truth—will yet be a great heritage of the nations ; but it wins its way to-day, as ever, either at home or abroad, only as it is enshrined in redeeming lives. A Christianity in individual, Church, or nation, which is ecclesiastical, or theological, rather than redemptive and absorbingly so, is a misnomer. It is our religion emptied of its life. The Christian religion, in its most distinctive phase, is the passion for souls.

We may treat of this passion from its more human or its more Divine side.

I. The Human Side of this Passion

1. *Those who learned of Christ, learned His love*

Early Christian souls were constrained by the love of Christ. This was the explanation of what, to others, seemed like a passion amounting to madness (2 Cor. v. 13). The love of Christ urged them to what they would never have thought of, or even been capable of, if they could have thought of it. The Master "*died for all.*" He, the incomparable One, the Lord, wholly abandoned Himself to the redeeming life. How could they live to themselves? His life was wholly a life for others' good ; what else could theirs be? They must not only tell a Gospel, they must live it ; not only speak of their Lord, but live to His praise, seek His noble ends. For the ministry of reconciling the world

to God He had passed on to them. They must bear their cross after Him.

Loving the Master, swayed by His love, they learned love of Him. It was His kind of love which became the passion of their souls, and gave to the Church its strong missionary character. The Christian soul was a redeeming soul, over-riding every barrier of prejudice or moral repugnance in the fulfilment of its mission. Christianity became a world-saving spirit, an enthusiasm for humanity.

What the Christian religion was it has ever been in the most characteristic periods of its history. Christ has been reborn in His people ever as a living Evangel, the Cross re-embodied, the passion for the true life of the masses of men. Christianity is there only, where, and in the degree in which, this redeeming Spirit is present and aglow.

2. *Those who learned of Christ, learned the Value of Souls*

A new epoch in human thought, and in the estimate especially of the value of human life, was represented by the phrase, "him for whom Christ died." The Christian learned that human personality—though represented in the lowliest and sinfullest—had infinite worth to God. The measure of that was the sacrifice of the Lord. He to whom equality with God was not something needing to be stoutly asserted, or something to be clung to, took upon Him the form of a servant—the human form—and then humbled Himself even to the death of the Cross

(Phil. ii. 6—8). The Heavenly One stooped to save a Magdalene, and that told the value of a Magdalene to God. Even she was to be valued as worth all that the God of grace might make of her.

A new and sweet deep tenderness passed to human life from a revelation of human worth like this. Souls were seen to be born for God. Sons were seen to be "heirs." All things were theirs. Life had in it infinite and gracious possibilities. Every human relationship was deepened. The child was a tender trust. Brothers became brothers for aye. The homes of earth became radiant with the light of Heaven. At their passing they only merged into the Home Eternal. They only "faded into its light."

This deep and tender relationship widened out. The slave became a "brother beloved." The least of those on whom God's grace shone was seen in new beauty. Heaven and God were the heritage of each.

These thoughts were in some measure dominant in the early Christian circles. If present in a moderately vivid form no wonder the passion for souls was kindled. Where the surface of life is penetrated, and Christian love recognises in brother-souls the loved ones of God, the passion is kindled again. The making of men is fascinating. The rescue of jewels is absorbing if only we may not be blind to the worth of the jewels. Heaven itself can grow jubilant over sinners made saints, and eagerly watch the patient warfare by

which the saint wins through (Luke xv. 7; Heb. xii. 1).

3. *The Passion for Souls becomes hot when the Alternatives of Bliss and Woe are contemplated*

There is nothing this generation so much needs as the recovery of the sense of these alternatives. We continually fall into the limitations of one-sided views. Nothing which touches "the larger hope" affects the responsibility of moral choice. Salvation is not by compulsion but by persuasion, or why the Cross?—why the holy passions of the Christ? The Cross is the sign that love cannot wait, or leave the soul in hazard. The soul is only safe when the ardour of the progressive life is enkindled in it, when it is anchored in Christ.

The first Christian generations saw the dread alternatives with all vividness. The time was short. The Lord would come again. To-morrow the light of His day might break. Would those around then be ready? He would come as King and Judge. Were they prepared to meet Him? The very surety of their Master's triumph and of the coming of His kingdom fore-shortened, for them, the distance. They must be ready at the cock-crowing of the morning or at midnight. The hand must be on the latch. There was no room for delay. Souls must be won and rescued from doom.

Our fathers of two generations ago saw the alternatives in all their awesomeness. The Judgment was, to them, immediately succeeding death. The

myriads who were dying were passing to endless bliss or endless woe. The wonder is not that the passion for souls was upon them, but that they could live to sustain it.

But we ; where do we stand? The truer, more spiritual view of these things should not engender a feeble passion. We do not doubt that in Christ is health and peace. Till individuals and nations come into the light of His life, they cannot know the fulness of hope and faith. Life remains for them an unrealised possibility. We do not doubt that in Christ is the vision, for everyone, of His own redemption, and the power by which it is to be realised. Some things are possible by nature, but more, vastly more, by the power of this great grace. Inspiration which will not die, and the call to holy heroism come from Christ. The assurance of complete victory over sin and the grave springs from Him. Heaven for the soul is with Him.

But what without Him? Life, even amid the influences of Christian atmosphere, is constantly corrupting ; fortunes of money and character are being recklessly squandered ; life becomes mean, brutal and selfish ; the light of hope is gradually darkened and men become of the earth, earthy. In heathenism there is the deep gloom of despair and a reckless wastage of human life, and the future is dark. The simple morality of earlier times has become overweighted in the ancient civilizations. These lack the ennobling which Christianity could long ago have brought. Men need the sense

of God's redeeming grace, just the sense the Christian possesses. Look at the Christless lives here or abroad, and to the sensitive soul there is hell enough. But were there no darkness and pain, no great misery deep as hell, is it nothing, is it little, that men should miss the life which would be Heaven to the soul? Theirs is the height of Heaven's glory and bliss and sacred companionship. What a doom unspeakable to miss it! Where it is not completely jeopardised, it is delayed. The delay is the cause of Heaven's travail. It should be of ours.

A great irrepressible longing will rise within us, if we will watch a while with the Saviour for the world's true life, that the Home of the Saints should be fully constituted, and that souls should be gathered into its blissful fellowship, sheltered from sin, and pain, and weeping; safe-folded from life's bleak wolds; established in the securities and peace of a life victorious and strong.

II. The Divine Side of the Passion for Souls

We are still treating of the passion for souls as a passion in human breasts, but as now arising from sympathy with Divine travail.

1. *We learn of the Master's Travail on earth and wistfully follow Him*

We see Him touched ever with human woe and frailty (Matt. viii. 17); ready to bear the burdens of the heavy-laden (Matt. xi. 28); eager in His

welcome of signs of progress in His disciples, but oft disappointed (Matt. xvi. 17, 23; xvii. 17); making love's strongest appeals (John xiii. 1—17; Matt. xxi. 33—42); following His loved ones in prayer (Luke xxii. 32); weeping over His loved city (Matt. xxiii. 37). We follow at a distance as He enters the Garden of Gethsemane. We remain apart awe-stricken at the greatness of His sorrow. We learn that though He came to do the Father's will, and gave Himself to do Love's redeeming work, the woeful manner of His rejection and condemnation is a peculiarly bitter cup, a disappointment like death. We follow yet to Calvary and find the Cross is to Him the very gloom of God-forsakenness, as though all He came to realise was lost; all He lived for had failed. This was very death. Yet He died submissively. He could commend His spirit and His life-work unto the Father.

No soul of us traverses this *via dolorosa* again, with our Master, but feels the call to share His deep travail, till the world be won. We would watch with Him, frail though we be, and very conscious that the task must be supremely His (Matt. xxvi. 40).

2. *The Travail of the Master is perpetuated in Heaven*

Gethsemane and Calvary are, in some sense, projected beyond the earthly life of Jesus. Our fathers made much of the phrase "it is finished." The atonement they held was completed on the Cross.

But what was finished? Our Lord's earthly task was done. He had passed through the deep valley of humiliation. Love, in Him, had triumphed in the bitter conflict. The foundation of His kingdom was securely laid. Never again would love need so to prove itself. Never, in the history of the world, would sacrifice like His be possible again. Men would suffer and travail for good ; but always, by faith, assured of victory. The Lord is in Heaven as victor, but awaiting His triumph.

Though He travail with the faith and surety of God, the travail of His heart is real. He shall, indeed, be satisfied (Isa. liii. 11) ; but not till His kingdom come.

> " He who for men their Surety stood,
> And poured on earth His precious blood,
> Pursues in Heaven His mighty plan,
> The Saviour and the Friend of Man."

Every soul, through all its history, is followed with Divine solicitude. Fatherhood cannot divest itself of that love to which all personal progress is exquisite joy, and all retrogression is unspeakable pain. The Father and Redeemer are one. To holy love sin is still a tragedy. God bears with us and for us. This is the greatness of His grace. He suffers to redeem. The passion of Jesus is perpetuated. His Cross has revealed the redeeming life of Heaven. There is joy there over the sinner repentant, because travail for his higher life is there. Heaven's life is a passion for redemption,

and a complete self-devotion to love's redeeming work.

3. *The Pathos of this Passion*

So far as human ministry is concerned, the work of reconciliation has passed to us. We are the Saviour's hands and feet. His voice must take on the accents of our speech. There are mysteries of the soul and of the Divine Spirit's working there ; but the persuasions of our Master gain their human touch through us. He waits the ministry of those who will represent Him.

This is all in God's providence. It must be well. There is no succession of incarnations, save as we reincarnate the Christ. The world's redemption awaits the fitting and powerful and willing instrument, in the community of Christian souls—the Church. There is the pathos of it all. The depth of the Master's passion we know. He desires with great desire sympathetic souls who would bespeak His great love, and intreat in His name. The well-being of souls is His very life.

4. *Our Travail must be in Sympathy with the Master*

Our passion will never be life-commanding until it is one with Christ's. We must feel with Him for men. His holy love must inspire us. We must enter into His own great longing. That longing, we believe, is engrossing even in Heaven. If that

had not been so there would have been no incarnation. To Heaven our Lord has borne the redeeming soul we know. For love of Him we must seek the satisfaction of His Divine heart, and spend ourselves that He, to whom we owe our all, may realise His soul's desire. By redeeming love we are His ; and for love of Him we must redeem.

Chapter XXII

SIN: OR REFUSING THE GREAT SALVATION

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation."—HEB. ii. 3.

"I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."—MATT. v. 20.

"Now was I got on high; I saw myself within the arms of Grace and Mercy. . . . Now death was lovely and beautiful in my sight. . . . At this time also I saw more in those words, *Heirs of God*, than ever I shall be able to express while I live in this world. *Heirs of God!* God Himself is the portion of the Saints."—BUNYAN'S "Grace Abounding," Books for the Heart Series, p. 149.

"I saw myself in a forlorn and sad condition, but yet was provoked to a vehement hunger and desire to be one of that number that did sit in the Sunshine."—*Ibid.*, p. 35.

"We have within us many sins against our Lord God, and which justly displease Him: such as anger, impatience, covetousness, greediness, incontinence, hatred, malice, etc. These are great sins, which everywhere in the world go on with power, and get the upper hand. Yet these are nothing in comparison of contemning God's word; yea, all these would remain uncommitted, if we did but love and reverence that. But, alas! the whole world is drowned in this sin."—LUTHER'S "Table Talk": Hazlitt, p. 112.

"God forgives sins merely out of grace for Christ's sake; but we must not abuse the grace of God."—*Ibid.*, p. 114.

CHAPTER XXII

SIN: OR REFUSING THE GREAT SALVATION

SOME will readily criticise the insertion of a chapter on Sin at this point in our exposition. We would only beg that judgment be stayed. There is reason in our choice.

In the time of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, many were thinking of the scrupulous keeping of the ancient law as the utmost requirement. He was, however, thinking of the awful guilt of rejection of God's *new* appeal—the marvellous appeal of His grace in Christ Jesus. So is it to-day. Many are thinking of sin only as a transgression of established law, whilst the new demands on conscience and life are quieted with tolerable ease and put on one side. Christian morality and the Sermon on the Mount are hardly, 'tis thought, for every-day use. We plead heredity and the influence of environment, and we palliate our weaknesses. We forget the new incentives to noble character, and our faithlessness in face of them. Sin is not merely transgression, but failure where no failure should have been.

1. *Let us turn back for a moment to One of the earliest Versions of Sin*

The Eden-story—that great Hebrew folk-story on the origin of sin—has been greatly criticised since

thought was so much influenced by the doctrine of evolution. There has been no "fall," it is said, but a fall upward. We are afraid that nothing is gained by the denial of an ancient traditionary fall—nothing but a poor attempt to save the face of a theory. Falls have been abundant enough, and the plainest verdict of conscience is that many of them occurred where they had no need to be. The most that results from the denial of an earlier fall is to post-date things a little.

The Eden-story is, surely, true in essentials. (1) In an evolutionary system there is a point at which the moral consciousness emerges, and the possibility of a choice between the better and the worse is presented. The history of morality presents, indeed, a succession of such points. At some point, too, there was the failure to respond as conscience said man might and ought. Unless we contend for an absolutely necessitarian evolution, which affords no place for freedom and morality, and, therefore, rejects the clearest facts of consciousness, it is of no avail to quarrel with the belief in a fall. There is also no question that moral weakness perpetuates itself hereditarily in all directions. (2) Curiosity and unlimited desire are represented in the story as the tap-roots of sin. There was an ancient suspicion that too much knowledge was a dangerous thing; and the ascetic solution of morals—the suppression of desire—has always appeared the readiest. It is true, however, that every new advance in knowledge, and every

accession of range in life, presents new possibilities both of evil and of good. And we have come to the conviction that we must take the risks of freedom and find holiness by moral conquest. We must regulate but not narrow life. Our goal is not only true life, but life in abundance. The one defect of this ancient view of sin is a defect which is also very modern. Sin is limited too much to the mere failure in resistance of evil. But there is a positive neglect of the good as well. There may be an itching desire to go over the hedge into our neighbour's garden and see what he has got, and help oneself to his fruit. There may also be the neglect to cultivate one's own garden. There is the sin of covetous greed ; but there is also the sin of a hardened selfishness.

2. *The ancient View of Sin is allied to the Notion that Morality may be and is prescribed in every detail*

The Divine will for men is defined in the tables or books of the law for all time. Morality is obedience to exact commands in all life's particulars and relationships. God orders all. The earnest Jew, however, proved that the system of enactments did not carry him far. And we know that moral health depends on an alertness of the soul—an open readiness to discover the higher good and pursue it—as well as on a conscience-clear adhesion to the good already known. Thus higher and higher morality emerges, and it is ever a question of rising to the new opportunity.

3. *The Demands of a progressive Morality are clearer if we make the well-known distinction between sins of omission and sins of commission*

Both ancients and moderns have thought almost exclusively of the latter—of positive transgression. A large part of law or equity is thereby suffered to be a dead letter. Large spheres of life are unreclaimed. Men are scrupulously virtuous in certain directions and entirely fail in others. They are strictly honest, it may be, and at the same time extremely uncharitable ; they speak the truth but lack the grace of courtesy, and are very unfeeling ; they commit no murder, but they suffer slander to be spoken without protest. How much good that is within our range goes unperformed ! How much more we refrain from enquiring too carefully about lest new duties should appear.

Now, in the light of what has been said, let us turn to the usual treatment of the subjects of Christian morality and redemption.

4. *Beginning is usually made with Sin*

Writers and speakers extend upon its universality and upon its racial impairment. They treat sin as though it were the occasion for the atonement. Had there been no sin there would have been, they state or imply, no atonement. Atonement was simply needed to right sin's fearful wrong, to clear the race of its contamination. Sin is thus made the cause of God's supreme revelation of grace.

5. *This Way of Approach surely darkens many Truths*—

the great truth for example that grace establishes the primal relationship between God and man. In our view, at least, and in our exposition, grace stands first. There is an essential vital loving relation of the Father to His children. It is often asked, Would the incarnation have been necessary but for sin? Surely the fulness of the revelation of the Godhead could only come that way ; and only by an intimate union of the Divine-human life with ours could we reach our goal. It follows from this that atonement, too, is essential to God's loving relationship to men. He is " at one " with us that He may bring us to all the fulness of life. Apart from sin this involves a certain degree of travailing care. What thought, and sympathetic helpfulness, and earnest moral striving, is spent upon the child's development though he bring never a pang by waywardness of life.

Apart from the essential relationship of Divine Love toward men there had been no sin. If the Creator had not been able to say that His work was good—effective for its moral ends ; and if Providence, physical and spiritual, had not been designed to further those ends, then sin, or what we so name, would have been a very relative failing. Sin is what it is because life is grace. Sin is so exceeding sinful because grace abounds. Sin is like dark, ponderous cloud-banks, lurid against a back-ground of sunlight. If all things were to be

overruled for good, and if the guiding spirit of life is known in the grace of Christ, what a curse sin must be! The misery of the world tells the tale. Our freedom and growth from weakness to strength, from ignorance to knowledge, involve a certain amount of necessary pain. But this is not the world's dark shadow. The gratuitous misery is our burden and shame. There are two measures of atonement—the depths of love, and the abyss of sin. Atonement has taken on all its peculiar bitterness and burdensomeness not because of man's error and failing, but because of his wilfulness, waywardness, and knowing wrongfulness. Error can be pitied. There is patience enough in love. Wrong, however, can only be sorrowed over and corrected. Even the righting of wrong love can undertake, but it cannot bear its wanton perpetuation. The repentant soul is its joy; but resistance to all its passion for goodness brings to love unspeakable sorrow. "Why will ye die?" it exclaims. Love desires life; but the loss of the loved one!—nothing is a sufficient measure of that to the heart of God.

THE great sorrow is because grace spends upon us its passionful effort in vain. Its renewed appeals are so little heeded. Read again the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Matt. xxi. 33—46, and parallels) and you will hear a sob and a wail in it. "Last of all . . . his Son—'They will reverence my Son.' But . . . they said . . . 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his

inheritance.'" The Son was an outcast. Love was spurned.

6. *It is Neglect of the great Salvation which is the greatest Sin*

Turn again to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. He has an awe-inspiring view of the old covenant ; but the new covenant, in all the manner of its unfolding, is yet more arresting. Ancient Sinai, tempest-riven, surrounded with blackness and darkness, breaking into volcanic eruption, and the voice heard with this dread accompaniment—all this cannot compare with the gift of Jesus and the disclosure of heaven which came through Him. The old law was exacting, but this revelation of grace is more penetrative in its appeal. By all the nearness and sympathetic oneness of the holy Redeemer, life must be purer and more unswervingly faithful. It must put on every grace of the Divine manhood. The great High Priest and His atoning work placed man under larger and more gracious obligation. The writer exclaimed, "How shall we escape if we neglect *so great* salvation?" It was not so much adherence to the old law of ordinances he was concerned about as response to this great new call.

So the sin of our day is the lack of response to all the gracious appeal which is in Jesus and His Cross. He came to communicate all His own life to us, at any sacrifice, but many will have none of it. They know the Gospel but do not heed it. They

might enter the kingdom—enter the life which owns allegiance to Christ—but they will not. The sin of those even who are called by the Christian name is that they put on so little of Christ. They are at ease in their Zion. They resist the demands of redeeming love upon them. They wish to be saved but not to save. They measure their sacrifices. They scarcely admit the claim that they should be as Christ in the world. They are still in the bonds of legalism. They ask what demand the law, in its Christian form, makes upon them. This they would discharge. To spend and be spent for men is for them an unworldly idealism inapplicable to work-a-day life. God is grace, but they have not learned that men must be gracious. They fail to consider "that in the course of justice none of us should see salvation," and that the prayer for mercy "doth teach us all to render the deeds of mercy."

7. *What are the usual Demands of modern Morality?*

Many think still of the old law of custom and enactments. They will pay twenty shillings in the pound. They will owe no man anything! They forget the clause which the Apostle added—with a serious smile, we think—"Save to love one another." A remarkable proviso! But surely Christian honour and love should carry us far beyond the demands of the law. We sin against these new requirements of the Christian conscience.

Our charity is a mere veneer—an addition to life. The charity required is earnest labour and life for the common weal. We, who are Christians, take our standard too much from the standards of the worldly, when we should take it from the spirit of our Lord, who, though the Lord, was pre-eminently the Servant (John xiii. 14 ; Phil. ii. 7, 8). But these claims, though urged upon us by all our Master's service of love and sacrifice unto death, are set on one side. The legal demand is all that many will rise to. There is in them no free grace born of the grace of God. Here is *the* sin of the privileged sons of to-day. They refuse to be heroic. They neglect the great salvation. It may do for them all it will, so long as it does not come too near, and make high claims.

The world waits to-day the new life of self-forgetful service. We are far from saying that there is not much of it. But self-interest is still in great dominance ; and the Master waits, with longing, the coming of His Spirit in all ways of life. It is that Spirit alone which will give us the new day we look to, and, however blindly, sometimes desire. The coming of love's reign is for the Master a very travail. His disappointment, in His earthly ministry, was not primarily with the outcasts or the heathen, but with the privileged of His own nation. His disappointment to-day is with those who heed not the new demands of the life of love and service, and who in effect refuse the great salvation.

8. *The individual Conscience does not suffer us to be content, short of response to the ideal Demands of Love*

We cannot satisfy ourselves with the duties of yesterday, we must press on to those of to-morrow. We cannot rest content with the knowledge of the good already attained. Our conscience accuses us so soon as we cease with eagerness to pursue the higher good. The personal relationships of life would be poorly interpreted if to them nothing were conceded but what came within the requirements of law and custom. Grace must reign ; love must set the standard. And that can only be an advancing standard. Our sin is put much too low if we think simply of the bare requirements of our loved ones in maintenance and education, or of the material comforts of the masses. There is a call for outlay of a more personal kind. Our fellows need the help of personal sympathy, personal cheer and stimulus, the light of our own best seeing, our prayer and spiritual oneness with them, our faith and hope as touching their life and life in general. This is our only proper contribution to their real well-being. THE sin is our failure, our omission, where failure is such personal loss. We may respond to every demand which ordinary worldly honour makes upon us, and yet omit many "weightier matters."

BOOK VI

THE CHRISTIAN SOCIAL IDEAL

CHAPTER XXIII

CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

"Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?"—MAL. ii. 10.

"Let each one of us please his neighbour for that which is good unto edifying. For Christ also pleased not Himself."—ROM. xv. 2, 3.

"There is one body and one spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling. . . . The work of ministering unto the building up of the body of Christ, till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man. . . . May grow up in all things into Him which is the head, even Christ, from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together, maketh the increase of the body to the building up of itself in love."—EPHES. iv. 4, 12, 13, 15, 16.

"The fountains mingle with the river,
And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In one another's being mingle."

SHELLEY, "Love's Philosophy."

"Love is the root of creation; God's essence; worlds without number
Lie in His bosom like children; He made them for this purpose only,
Only to love and be loved again, He breathed forth His spirit
Into the slumbering dust, and upright standing, it laid its
Hand on its heart, and felt it was warm with a flame out of heaven.
Quench, O quench not that flame! It is the breath of your being.
Love is life, but hatred is death."

Tegner's "Children of the Lord's Supper," LONGFELLOW.

CHAPTER XXIII

CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

CHRISTIANITY stands for the creation of a universal Society, the Brotherhood of Man. This is the ideal it cherishes, and for the realisation of the ideal it believes there is power enough available.

Neither Christ Himself nor the religion He founded contemplates simply the redemption of an aristocracy of influence, or of intellect, or of talent, or of native goodness. There is hope and help for the poorly endowed, for the narrowly circumstanced, and even for the moral pariah. The grace of God is toward all men. There are none excluded from the Society, established on the rule of Christ the Lord, but the self-excluded—neither in time nor eternity.

Christian life is life built up on the principle of interdependence, and in the spirit of love. The Christian spirit encourages self-reliance, for it would make the most of the individual soul. But the soul is rich in its personal fellowships and service. Independence, strictly speaking, there is none. There is a free and full import and export of services. Only so is life strong; only so is there life at all.

The perfection of the individual is, as we have seen, impossible except in and with the perfecting

of his environment. Individual and social life move in parallel developments. There has been one exception to the rule—Jesus. But it is here His uniqueness is most manifest. He, though of the earth, is more of Heaven. His environment is the heavenly society—the unclouded fellowship of the Father. "I and my Father are one" is His experience (John x. 30). The Son of Man is all the while in Heaven—of the heavenly Society—whilst on earth (John iii. 13). The Father hears Him always (John xi. 42). From heavenly sources new life pours into the world through Jesus Christ. He is the fount of a new Society, more fully reproducing the heavenly, on earth. He is the true vine. From intimate and vital relationship to Him, as branches to vine, His followers live their true life. Of all the Father is the husbandman (John xv.).

1. *Christian Society is built up by the Stimulus of Christ-inspired Souls mutually acting on one another*

"As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Prov. xxvii. 17). Mirror may reflect heat to mirror, and it may be focussed in a point; and so with a system of mirrors. So from person to person influence passes. It centres here, it centres there. It is radiated again. Within the complete orbit of a social system an intense energy may be created. The originating inspiration in each soul is supplied from without, but no life is self-contained. It receives personal

influences from all sides, and, in like manner, communicates them. Thought stimulates thought; emotion stirs emotion; courage inspires courage; resolution nerves to resolution; bold activity leads to heroic hazard, as soul influences soul. With progressively constituted beings, too, any activity suggests the possibility of a greater activity; and the heroism of the childlike and simple will stimulate the heroism of those capable of the works of genius. Because life was intended for infinite social enrichment, and for the joy which in the individual heart should be the reflex of the widest social joys, so were we made mutually dependent, with streams of influence passing ever to and fro. The soul is as a shore on which the infinite sea rebounds and reverberates. Man is a social being; his life has touch with the utmost confines of life around him. There are echoes of all life within. All this is true in a new and intense degree of those who have learned Christian love.

2. *Christian Society is Life in Co-operation*

Love is not a mere sentimentality. It is life for life; life consecrated to the real weal of another. It is expressed in a mutual and co-operative activity, but it is based on that interest in another life which is often more absorbing than interest in one's own. It varies in its purity; but no love is really worthy of the name which does not coincide with some ideal conception of another's good. It is often associated with an idealising conception of what

another *is;* but it should always be linked with a noble view of what another *may be.*

Christian life is an enthusiasm for the common weal, and this in the form of a love of individuals and of their ideal life. In the Christian order the common weal cannot become too abstract until the individual interest is lost in it. Christian love in its perfection is a universal love of souls. It is also, in its perfection, mutual—a full co-operation of life; but in its beginnings it is often a self-forgetful desire for another's good, with the hope only of the more distant recompense of love. It is, in a word, redemptive. Co-operation and mutual devotion, however, are the ends sought—soul in soul, life with life. Where Christian social ideals are being realised life is setting in full stream on the progressive course. Wind and tide and current are with it. Here is not only unity of sentiment and aspiration, but a growingly perfect unity of life with all its resources and activities. The familiar illustration of the Apostle Paul is the illustration of the body with its variety of members and functions combined into a rich fulness of powers. It is life, after the measure of Christ's own, through the healthful contribution of every part—which again is vital only in Him. It is health and vigour through the well-being of each member and the mutual co-operation of all. The body with its variety of higher and lower functions (head and foot) is again but illustration of the variety of gifts among men, and the whole body but illustration

of how these may be combined, though so diverse, in one spiritual organism. The elements may be the most various, and yet the one controlling and unifying spirit secure co-operation and the richer life which results. Here, in these engineering works, you see patterns formed, castings of iron or of brass moulded and cast, forgings roughly shaped under the huge hammer, and then the parts turned and polished, and fitted together, until the locomotive stands complete—a wonder of mechanism. So the individual may have all his faculties wrought into a co-operative enthusiasm and directed to some great end ; and the like wonder may be wrought by the influence of the Spirit of Christ in the body social. Then this further wonder is wrought in the living as distinguished from the mechanical unity. Every single soul in the society, where love rules and a co-operative enthusiasm obtains, has strength and capacity enlarged. This is the result of the interaction of life which we have already illustrated in speaking of the mutual stimulus of individuals, only here the power is multiplied by a geometrical progression just to the extent of the expanding co-operation. The inherent powers of the soul are only shown when love summons them forth. We may call to witness the lives of many redeemed in early and in modern days.

3. *Christian Society is dominated by one Spirit*

Our illustration from engineering was not complete. Behind every operation there was the plan

which set forth the engineer's conception, and the organising genius which secured that the engineering works were the instrument for the realisation of the plan. So the strong conviction of one mind may dominate a nation's policy, and the enthusiasm of one great soul may move a whole society. Philosophically we may assure ourselves that one mind and one moral purpose mould life and history. But in the concrete the Master-spirit has been Christ Jesus. He has profoundly influenced human life in its essential elements. The future, as we conceive it, is one which must be ruled by His Spirit. It is Christianity which points the way for men. The more perfect Society must embody the Spirit of Christ—His estimate of the worth of the soul, His consecration of all to its well-being. The Christ comes to rule through His own—through those whom He uses as hands and feet, hearts and minds for the realisation of His will. It is only those who cherish His estimates of the soul's value, of its future, and of its essential relation to God who can lead in a universal co-operation of life—a brotherhood of the race. But, unless all our faith and hope be vain, thus Christ must reign.

Christian society is not entirely synonymous with the Church. There are those who are of the Churches who are not of Christ ; know nothing of His essential Spirit. There are those who are not of the Churches who certainly are of Christ. Aught really good under any name Christ owns. "He

that is not against us is for us" (Mark ix. 40), He said. He has no object but human well-being and quarrels with nought that tends that way. The true spirit is one. Christ is its name. He is its finest expression. When it knows itself and Him truly it will always be proud to be named by His name.

There are those who cannot think of society except in the form of societies ; nor of the Church except in the form of one organisation ; yet they must recognise that kinship of spirit crosses every such artificial line of demarcation, and that there is a co-operation of forces in spiritual and social affairs which is greater than any organised expression of that. Social forms are by no means vain. They are expressions of the social spirit. But they pass away giving place to ever deeper and wider expressions of that spirit ; whilst the spirit itself trusts to its own strong affinities. It seems, indeed, occasionally to break up old forms and re-organise under new with astonishing readiness.

4. *Christian Society is gathering the Wealth of Life into it*

In the new manhood which the Christian system contemplates there is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman (Col. iii. 11). Humanity is one (Acts xvii. 26). The wealth of Hindu life in respect of religious feeling ; the devotion to domestic and civic well-being, and an ideal kingdom in this world, of the Chinese ; all the

simple heroism of the South Sea islander ; and many another form of national life and character is being gathered to-day into the wider Christian Society. In the final result every people will have contributed some element to the riches of Christian or universal manhood. God and His Christ cannot do without any one such element. Manhood cannot dispense with it. "Nothing," it will be found, has "walked with aimless feet when God has made the pile complete." All individual and national characteristics contribute to the riches of the manhood in Christ Jesus. "The kings of the earth do bring their glory" into the City Eternal (Rev. xxi. 24). Every gift of manhood contributes to the wealth of the Christian Society. Every element of worth is gathered up into the Christian order of life ; finds there its full development.

5. *There is Nothing monotonous in the perfected Christian Society*

Manhood, in it, reaches "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." It has become full-grown (Ephes. iv. 13). But differences of function remain. The man of the future, as now we may anticipate him, will be a man of wide outlook on history, philosophy, science, art, and practical affairs in business and public life ; but he will be found faithfully fulfilling one function or a small range of functions. He will be like the trained musician whose ear is immediately awake to discern the musical theme. He knows the school it

represents, the composer to whom it belongs, the work it is from. The theme calls up to him many rich associations. He hears one theme, but it has a wealth of musical colour in it for him. His soul is thrilled, maybe, by the harmony of full band and chorus; yet all the while he plays this 'cello, piccolo, or cornet. So the fully nurtured Christian soul will have wide sympathies, as though all life conveyed thrills of joy to him, and yet he will be willing to play his humble part in the grand harmonious chorus of life. Intelligent sympathy, co-operative life, and desire for universal good will be all in all. This does not mean that the individual will be content to contribute less than his utmost to the larger life according to his ability, but simply that he will not await personal omnipotence to enable him to enter into the universal joy. His real wealth will lie in his sympathies, and in the outgoings of sympathetic power; not in what his hand may find to do simply, though that will be faithfully and fully done.

This means, finally, that everyone is of this Christian Society, this glorious commonwealth, so far as it is yet realised on earth, who is at spirit one with the Christ, one with the Spirit of universal good. Whether, then, his function be the lowliest, or whether, indeed, it be the highest, he is of the Society by virtue of his kinship of soul with those who live for the common good, and with Him who is the Master-spirit and ever-living power of such life. The spiritual providence of our Father-

God will secure that no contribution of the child who loves is lost. He is the great unifier and organiser of life. If matter is indestructible and force cannot be dissipated, much less can the efforts of the good will come to nothing. The soul that loves becomes more and more conscious of the wide ramifications of the life in which he shares, and of its oneness. "All things work together for good." This, as the Apostle showed, was a principle of very wide sweep.

Chapter XXIV

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

"Jesus came . . . preaching the Gospel and saying: The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand."—MARK i. 14, 15.

"Thy kingdom come."—MATT. vi. 10.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven."—MATT. xiii. 33.

"He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet."—1 COR. xv. 25.

"A kingdom that cannot be shaken."—HEB. xii. 28.

God "delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."—COL. i. 13.

"Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith: 'A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid.'"
R. BROWNING, "Rabbi Ben Ezra."

"In withdrawing from the historic scene the early disciples meant to retire, not into a mystic life of individual piety, much less into any Stoic strength of personal isolation, but into the citizenship of a better community soon to be realised, and blending in itself meanwhile the seen with the unseen, and animating the posts of duty below with the living inspiration of Christ and God above."

"Looking away from the scattered and broken fragments of goodness among men to the perfect natures of a supernal sphere, the disciple was carried clear past the ancient standards of piety and moral strength; and . . . rose to the great idea of One Righteousness, realised in heaven, approached on earth, alike possible, alike necessary, for all minds."—MARTINEAU, "Hours of Thought," pp. 261, 262.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THE Kingdom of God was THE theme *par excellence* of the Master's preaching. As the Baptist before Him, He constantly spoke of the imminence of the Kingdom. He said "it is upon you"—it is here. He knew Himself as ushering in a new era.

The establishment in permanency of the Kingdom is the goal of the Gospel, the climax of history. The Divine scheme—the mystery of the ages—is the rearing of the abiding eternal fellowship of personal life from the midst of the evanescent conditions of time. It is the creation of a Society which shall be for the praise and joy of God Himself.

We may so regard our preceding theme of the "Christian Society" as to make it almost synonymous with the Kingdom. We may see how it roots in pre-Christian forms of life, especially along the Jewish line of development; how, in a broader sense, a preparation has been made for it in every religion; and how it may yet widen, according to our Christian faith, until it is actually commensurate with life. Distinctively Christian Society, however, we regard as having its foundation in Christ—His new unfolding of life's meaning, His new revelation of God, and His comprehensive redeeming love. In the idea of the *Kingdom* we

include all the ways of Providence, in material and spiritual things, and all that personal ministry of grace, whereby the culmination of history is reached, and this in every nation and along every line of development. The Kingdom, too, as we see it realising itself on earth merges into heaven. The eternal is the unseen (2 Cor. iv. 18). We are compassed about, we who run our race on earth, with a cloud of witnesses (Heb. xii. 1).

Here and now we have before us :—

1. *The Foundations of the Kingdom*

When the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews would tell of the achievements of faith and of the making of the City Eternal, where does he begin? With Abel. He leads on the story through Abraham and Moses, through Judges and Prophets. The movement runs back to the first aspirations after a better life of the earliest members of the race. It is represented by those who at any time were willing to hold lightly the earthly inheritance which was theirs if they might realise more of the heavenly ; and it is crowned by those who were actually disinherited, were hunted and persecuted, and became homeless wanderers in their loyalty to life's ideals. The early Christians soon realised that preparations for the Christian religion and life had been made " in every nation " (Acts x. 35) ; that men were " one " in their seeking for God, though this might be, among some, an uncertain groping with but the dim hope of finding (Acts xvii. 26, 27).

Christian thinkers in early, and still more in later times, have discovered that the Roman world was working to a climax of need both of new religious faith, and of new cleansing and invigorating of the founts of life, when Jesus came. The world, even more widely, seems to have been filled with a wistful expectancy—a new hope born of very despair. The foundations of the Kingdom of God, then, lie in the deepest and earliest instincts of the race; in that something in man as man which can only be satisfied by God and ideal life. The Kingdom eternal begins, so far as our world's history is concerned, in the creation of man as a religious being—in moral personality.

But because the Kingdom may dispense, in turn, with every external form, men are apt to be impressed with its vagueness and unreality. Let us, therefore, see :—

2. *The Kingdom as it is actually coming*

It has its beginning in the faith of faithful souls. Jesus rested everything on faith. Where one soul fully trusted Him as the Hope and Redeemer of the world—the Christ—there He beheld the rock-foundation of His Kingdom among men (Matt. xvi. 18). How He hailed that secure basis ! The pledged fidelity of a soul was the most sacred thing He knew. The truth of a man to the supreme call was that in him which was of God Himself in the deepest sense. Where

> "One man's plain truth to manhood and to God's supreme design"

appeared, He was on surest ground. The fidelity might be weak and wavering, but it would grow strong so long as it was genuine. And, in such matters, Jesus knew Himself the maker of souls. There He trusted Himself and the Father's eternal unfailing grace. There *was* a power which could save.

Wherever there was the sworn fidelity of even the two or three, as touching the higher things of life, there Jesus saw the beginnings of the life eternally sure (Matt. xviii. 18, 19). Where soul is pledged to soul, where personal life is consecrated unreservedly to personal life, in wedded bliss, there is life which should have some real counterpart in the kingdom eternal. The home which is true home should merge, in all completeness, in the heavenly home. There is a deep kinship, of this order, on many wider ranges of life ; for example, in devotion to great causes, and in fidelity to fatherland. The Christian kinship of soul is, at least ideally, the deepest and widest among men. It would make of every man, of whatever state or condition, a free citizen of a universal Kingdom. It has for its creative genius the Christ Himself, the most universal and mighty of personal forces. We look for the universal reign of the Son of God, and for the oneness of the world in Christian hope and faith and love. We definitely await this unity of the Spirit.

The non-Christian nations are yet, we believe, to come, on their own ground, and from the standpoint

of their own religious life, to recognise that when they have named their God, in each case, most truly, the best and highest name they can frame for Him is " the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ " ; that when they have conceived the finest type of human life they have it realised in Jesus ; when, too, they desire the triumph of that life, the grandest surety available is the personal influence of the ever-living Saviour.

But many things in God's providence are now making for the Kingdom. Life's progress as shaped in this world's affairs contributes to its coming. The world's space is shrinking by increasing swiftness of communication. The Atlantic has narrowed to the span of four and a half days' travel. The apocalyptic vision of " no more sea " is so far becoming fact that the sea is ceasing to be a barrier, is becoming rather a connecting link between the nations. By establishment of wireless telegraphy the ocean-liner is kept in touch with either shore during its passage. The ends of the earth are coming within speaking distance. The flying-machine promises to inaugurate as great a revolution as the application of steam. Then national frontiers tend to fall away. The commerce of nations is creating an ever larger comity of material interest. The literature, music, and art of nations is becoming the possession of the world as a whole. Civilized life is becoming standardised by Hague Conferences, and by myriad ways of intercourse and influence. The world is shaping

one morality, one system of law. It seemed a poet's dream almost when Tennyson wrote of "the Parliament of Man the Federation of the World," but it is turning out to be a prophecy. The world is gaining one soul, one sentiment; and another poet (Lowell) if he expressed something of his own time, was still more truly eloquent of a coming day when he wrote :—

"For mankind are one in spirit, and an instinct bears along,
Round the earth's electric circle, the swift flash of right and wrong.
Whether conscious or unconscious, yet humanity's vast frame,
Through its ocean-sundered fibres, feels the gush of joy or shame—
In the gain or loss of one race all the rest have equal claim."

In our day, if only we may open our eyes upon the great unifying movement we may see on every hand the Kingdom coming; discern, indeed, that it is "amongst us." Commercially, politically, intellectually, spiritually the world becomes one and the process is here before us.

3. *The Kingdom is being immovably established*

We can imagine many a wide catastrophe as possible before that goal is reached on earth. Kingdoms of earth may rise and fall. The social combinations of men may entirely change. Society may be reconstructed on other economic principles. Wide racial conflicts may come in, and some of the things which seem to be permanently won may again be lost. The stronger races, physically, may overrun the weaker, without the stronger being, in every

case, the most advanced in the establishment of permanent moral conditions and civilised enlightenment.

As a matter of fact the generations are passing away in succession now. Do they survive the apparent catastrophe of death? Do they vanish, in succession; and pass as a watch in the night?

The only surety is the moral surety, that He who has included this spiritual ideal movement in the scheme of life and providential government will see to it that nought—things present, things to come; powers seen or unseen — shall thwart the great design which is unfolded in the love of Jesus Christ, and the eternal purpose of grace which He expresses (Rom. viii. 38, 39).

The grand process is perpetuated beyond these fields of time. The Kingdom is in the world seen and unseen. Those in the higher ranks are not uninterested in our warfare (Heb. xii. 23); they, on the other hand, without us, are not made perfect (Heb. xi. 40). There is here interplay of life. The forces are one. The Kingdom is one. We only see part of the process. What we see is "earnest" of what is yet to be. Here and now we are reassured by the manifest advance towards the more permanent society on earth. Notwithstanding many disappointments and many drawbacks "the promise of a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" is being fulfilled (2 Pet. iii. 13). The kingdom which cannot be shaken is being established (Heb. xii. 28).

4. *But how? By Descent, surely, of heavenly and gracious Powers*

The coming of Jesus is, in this sense, as we have shown at an earlier point, normal. He is the unique example of a spiritual intervention which is continuous. As the Master says, the individual soul must be born from above, if he is to see and enter into the higher life (John iii. 3). He Himself came down from heaven (John iii. 13). He is the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. xv. 45). He is the ever-living Intercessor, and is able to save to the uttermost (Heb. vii. 25). He succours the tempted (Heb. ii. 18). The Spirit helps us in our weakness (Rom. viii. 26). The saints above share this spiritual ministry. There is a solidarity of the life seen and unseen.

We need not wonder at the continuous in-play of these higher forces. The Son of Man, the gift of Heaven, is a sower. His Kingdom is like a seed sown. Consider that strangely expressive figure, and the practically endless power of the seed to transform the rude material of this world into living forms! There is a yet more expressive metaphor —"the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven." The world for ages was but dead matter, and at some point received a deposit from the upper life. That ferment filled the world with vegetable growth. There were ages of development of vegetable life, and then a further deposit from the upper life, and animal life in all its multitudinous forms reared

itself on the basis of vegetable life. There were ages again and yet another ferment was deposited which gave man, bearing in him the beginnings of spiritual personality and the germ of the kingdom of God on earth. Why not another such cycle of the life process? There were generations of natural development of man's spiritual nature, under inspiration from on high, and then Jesus the Lord was given to be pre-eminently the light and life of men (John i. 4). The ferment of the Christ-Spirit, if we may now so name it, has recast, and is recasting the spirit of man. When His work is accomplished the Kingdom will have come; spiritual kinship in earth and heaven will have been realised. The process throughout is that of taking the lower life up into the heavenly. So is it born anew.

5. *What, then, is the Kingdom when perfected?*

We can only enter so far into and anticipate the ideal. We may take the Book of the Revelation and find all the essentials there. The writer, at points, is dominated by his Jewish limitations, and anon these vanish. The tribes of Israel have some pre-eminence in the company of the redeemed (Rev. vii.); but presently that company is the multitude, which is not to be numbered, gathered out of every nation, and of all tribes, and peoples, and tongues. He has seen one go about with a golden measuring-rod and he knows the measurement of the eternal city. It is foursquare; its length is 1,500 miles and so is its breadth. Yes, it

is an immense city even as modern cities go. But stay, he has another measurement. It is 1,500 miles *high!* (Rev. xxi. 16). But presently even this calculation vanishes for "the measure of a man" turns out to be that "of an angel." Yes! the city requires a spiritual measurement to compass it, especially in height and depth. And that is true.

But further, the blood-bought throng of the redeemed is victorious over sin, and pain, and death; the multitude of that heavenly host tunes all its life to praise; it enters on life inexhaustible and full of satisfaction; it enjoys high companionship with God and the Lamb. This life is life, at last, in which Christ reigns. He is centre and soul of it. It is a glorious fellowship of the pure, the noble, the loving. It contains all the riches of developed humanity. It is a Society constituted in love and righteousness. Who would not cherish the mighty hope to be of such a Society; to share its bliss even for a moment? But to join in its great pæan of progress for evermore; to learn what life may be, when, at last, it is sure, and bounding with the hope and faith and love which abide; to be a humble sharer in the riches of the fellowship of the good and great of all climes and ages—ah! of God's grace to come to that! It must, indeed, transcend our most inspired dreams. Yet it is just this which God, of His grace, would give to humble mortals. This is the promise of which life and redemption are the seal.

Chapter XXV

THE FUTURE

"A new order of things, in the fulness of the times—a summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens, and things upon the earth."—EPHES. i. 10.

"This is the promise, which He promised us, the life eternal."—1 JOHN ii. 25.

"When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption . . . then Death is swallowed up in victory."—1 COR. xv. 54.

"Our second thought is that the hope of humanity is a common one, and that all or none will be partakers of immortality. Reason does not allow us to suppose that we have greater claims than others, and experience sometimes reveals to us unexpected flashes of the higher nature in those whom we had despised." "If there is a good and wise God, then there is a progress of mankind towards perfection; and if there is no progress towards perfection, there is no good and wise God. We cannot suppose that the moral government of God, of which we see the beginnings in the world and in ourselves, will cease when we pass out of life."—JOWETT'S "Plato," Introduction to Phaedo, vol. i., pp. 411, 416.

"There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops and sweet societies,
That sing, and, singing, in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes."

MILTON'S "Lycidas."

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep;
All these, with ceaseless praise, His works behold
Both day and night."

"Paradise Lost," Book iv.

"When we turn to contemplate human life in its nobler representatives, its beautiful, heroic, saintly spirits, refined and chastened by the discipline of life, growing to the last in purity and nobleness, it is impossible to believe, unless the world is governed by a mocking Moloch, and not a God of wisdom and love, that all this abruptly terminates in a little heap of foul and mouldering matter, and that the end of these men is that of the beasts that perish."—PRINCIPAL CAIRD'S "University Sermons," p. 279.

CHAPTER XXV

THE FUTURE

ACCORDING to New Testament writers, who express the mind of the immediate followers of the Master, the Divine intention respecting the natural world was that it should be the theatre of personal history, and the handmaiden of personal development. Nature was for man. She is largely unmeaning and certainly imperfect without him. And similarly the purpose of history—of human development—according to these writers, was the new ordering of life, under the headship and ruling spirit of Jesus Christ. This new dispensation included the realisation of one Kingdom in heaven and earth of which the Redeemer should be the crowned King. The ultimate issue of things according to the eternal design was a unity of personal life, of which the Christ should be the head and the heart. The Christian idea of the future all centres in this Eternal Kingdom—this rich and permanent fellowship of *persons* who have reached the fulness of their life, through God's supreme gift in Jesus.

It follows from this whole conception of things that:

1. *There is no individual, or let us say individualistic, Certainty of Immortality*

We cannot attain to that certainty in our isolation, or in contemplation of what is given in our own

life in its singleness and aloneness. There is many a whisper in us of the great possibilities of our life, and many a comforting assurance of the gracious purpose of God toward us. Life itself is an unspeakable gift; and we cannot perfect the task which is given us in it without stretching the wings of hope towards the ideal. But we are frail, unstable, imperfect. We look in on ourselves and at best have a trembling hope relieved by momentary flashes of faith. In the clear calm light, our personal character does not bear rigid scrutiny. We have striven to be faithful, it may be, but, in the best, there have been grave weaknesses and inequalities of devotion. The flame has not burned with steadiness. Then, the truer and tenderer and more perfect the character, the more is it sensitive to its failure.

Better assurance comes when we look on the face of our blessed dead. The truth of another's life we discern more clearly, and judge, we think, more impartially, or with the generosity which is simple justice. The mutual pledges 'twixt our loved ones' and our own souls bespeak an inner truth and fidelity that in life survives many rude changes of circumstance. Then, why not beyond this life also? We know the worth to us of other lives and judge their mission of usefulness is not exhausted. It is easier, then, to believe in the future life of those who have become an essential part of all our best.

The assurance, looking on the single life, grows

stronger and clearer when we turn to Jesus. This, because His is so universal a personality. He loses Himself, in love, seeking the common good. He is selfless and pure ; the very truth of all life is in Him. If He were lost the heart and soul of life itself were gone. But isolate the life of Jesus, fail to see it as related to God's eternal purpose, and absolute certainty even here will fail you—proofs of resurrection notwithstanding.

2. *There is Assurance of Immortality only when we see ourselves as part of the great Divine Scheme of life—the eternal purpose of God*

Let us see that Nature—the material creation—issues in life ; that life natural issues in life spiritual ; that the material kingdom is but a basis for the personal; that personal life again issues in Christ, the flower and fruit of humanity ; and that He is destined to be the Head of a new and redeemed race ; then this which is the very meaning of things we shall be persuaded cannot all come to nought. History cannot end in a flash. The universe cannot be for nought and in vain. We stand with the Christ on the mount of vision, and look over the past ages in the light which He casts upon them ; and with Him we, in some measure, enter into the Apocalypse of the future. If, finally, we may believe that it is God's gracious purpose that of all this we should be sharers, that otherwise we had not come to be at all, and that the gift of Jesus is the pledge and sign-manual of the covenant

in love with us, then the hope of eternal life may definitely take shape in us. Heaven and earth may pass away, but this the higher purpose of creation, in which we graciously share, shall not pass away. The moral condition of our participating in this hope is that here and now we seek spiritual oneness with the Christ, and become part and parcel of His kingdom, of which we have spoken.

3. *There is no proper Assurance of Immortality which does not grow out of the Promise of this Life*

That is an exceedingly poor hope of the future which bases itself upon a despair of the present. The other life must not be regarded simply as a patching-up of this. There is, it is true, an argument for futurity arising from the inequalities of our present existence. But only if a moral purpose be recognised in the whole. We are bound to resort to this faith when the inequalities of the present become gloomy, and no immediate remedy appears. Rectification must come somewhere. But to make another life wholly a consolation for failure here is poor philosophy. That other life must be regarded as the climax and fulfilment of this. Life must be held so good and so full of rational and gracious purpose as to require continuance in eternity.

4. *The other Life, in the Christian View, is continuous with this*

There is divergence of opinion here, but, on reflection, the matter seems clear enough. There

could be no break in consciousness without destroying the personality. Life is always a complex of inner powers in harmony with a certain environment. Any large disturbance means dissolution. The environment cannot be absolutely and suddenly changed, and life, at the same time, be preserved. The possibility of a prolonged interval of unconsciousness between the sleep of death and the waking to life is associated with ideas of the Judgment not derived from the New Testament. The New Testament idea is of a "crisis," or climax and completion of the present order of existence, in which the proper issues shall have worked out, and judgment by fiat will be unnecessary (Matt. xiii. 40; Luke xi. 31, 32; xii. 2; John xii. 48). Life is a succession of "crises" (John xii. 31, 32). THE Judgment, ἡ κρίσις, is at "the consummation of the ages"; but is then only the natural outcome of the whole process of history (John xii. 47). Meanwhile, for the saint, it is "absent from the body, at home with the Lord." There is no room for dalliance, or the passage of meaningless time, in good life.

Then, as the child awakes to this world, so, it would seem, we must wake on another. The transcendent glory of that other life must gradually dawn upon the soul, or the overwhelming grandeur of it would again threaten the continuance of personality.

This, however, is sure, from the moral point of view, that no Divine fiat may bestow the other life

upon us. By all analogy of life, it must be morally achieved, personally won, if in the end it is to be really ours. Nothing is personally given in life's true commerce which is not personally received. The other life must, therefore, be continuous with this and grow directly out of it or it could not be morally related to it.

We are surrounded, according to the New Testament, by a great cloud of witnesses, intimately interested in all our moral warfare (Heb. xii. 1). But an inactive interest is almost unthinkable. The heavenly hosts participate in our great campaign. We are not come to a God revealed in the mount of judgment but to the city of the living God, to the festive assembly in the midst of which He dwells. With this company we have contact of life —the firstborn of the Church, just men made perfect, myriads of angels, Jesus Himself. They are with us in the race we run. There could not be joy in heaven over the sinner won if there were no travail in heaven for the sinner's redemption (Luke xv. 10). The joy is in the long-cherished desire consummated.

5. *The two Sides of Life are merging into one another*

According to the vision of the writer of the Book of the Revelation, he saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. xxi. 2). The consummation of things is the wedding of earth and heaven. God dwells with men, they become His

peoples ; sorrow and death are done away, joy and life are established. The heavenly life takes up into itself the earthly and all its interests, as it weds completely redeeming love with all earth's problems. The whole process of redemption is a being "born from above." It is the diviner life which anticipates us, plans for us, goes before us, realises life on our behalf, and sees us through—it is this life, coming more and more into every phase, department, relationship of this lower life and transforming it into the heavenly likeness.

But from the hither side of life we are merging more and more into the upper world of interests and activities. The veil hangs thick and dark between, but it is thinning. Light shines through the cloud. Through faith, not of the vague sort, but of that kind which grounds itself on God's eternal purpose revealed in creation and redemption, we anticipate the future. We labour on our side for its realisation as do the heavenly hosts from theirs. Great souls in their most heroic trials are conscious of "the chariots of the Lord and the horsemen thereof." A Jesus, beginning definitely to face death in the accomplishment of His redeeming mission, communes with Moses and Elijah. *One* is the great task of the saints in time and in eternity. Those who strive most and best are most conscious of the wide fellowship of earth and heaven. There is gracious succour in trial (Matt. iv. 11 ; Acts xxiii. 11 ; xxvii. 23). At the worst, who or what can separate us from Christ? What power

can come between us and God ; what change can banish us from the blessing of His love ? (Rom. viii. 35, 39). By faith we see the heavenly victors and catch the sound of their pæan of triumph. It is our humble hope to join hands with them, and to enter into their rich, their wise, their holy fellowship. Ah ! dare we cherish the hope ? It seems, at times, too great, and then we remember that God and good souls are by nature gracious. Then we hope again—

> " For the pardon of sin is the crown of His glory,
> And the joy of the Lord to be true to His name."

6. *What, then, is the Character of this ultimate Life ?*

The depth of it is known in Christ. It has the rich moral content of His glorious nature. His saints grow like Him. The breadth of it reaches to the compass of all true life in earth and heaven. Every soul takes on a large and growing measure of this depth and breadth of life in its truth and grandeur. A life noble, true, beautiful as the Christ's ; a life universal in its sympathies and interests—such is the prospect. It is this life, too, in its rich co-operative fulness, every soul echoing sympathetically to all true life around. As Bernard of Cluny sang :—

> " I know not, oh ! I know not,
> What social joys are there,
> What radiancy of glory,
> What bliss beyond compare."

Well might the Apostle say : " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered the mind

of man, what God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). What that new life may be we are incapable of anticipating. At last our thought of it is bound to be apocalyptic. We may picture it according to the language and metaphors of our earthly experiences of the higher order, only hinting at its surpassing grandeur. But we must finally confess we have not learned its language of thought and emotion. Life's developments have always been surprising. We can only now imagine the effect of the first great outburst of art, in sculpture, painting, music ; of the first sense of the reflective and reconstructive powers of the mind in sublime philosophy, and poetry, and literature ; of the first vision of a world-wide empire or social organisation. But we know what it has been to wake to new wonders of science, new and marvellous grasp of the powers of Nature, a new capacity to lay the world under contribution to our life. The mind of the world has opened up to us, the soul of the world has unfolded its secrets. The ages past have laid their contribution at our feet, and we have become quickly sensitive to every pulse of modern life. These things come upon us as surprises. But, who can anticipate the conditions of the later twentieth century? The new awakening of sympathy for human life which has been the characteristic of modern times is but in the infancy of its effects. Who then can anticipate the qualities of the future life ; who may enter into the depths of the social life in heaven? We only know it all

as the climax of this present life. We have the "earnest" of it in the Spirit (2 Cor. v. 5). It is a rapture, a bliss. It is the fellowship of the great and good. It is a triumph. It is the life in which faith, hope and love are constant. Manhood in its essential characteristics is the same, but it has been translated to new conditions ; to the life which God wholly illumines, and where love reigns, and joy is unfading. Such is our vision.

The chief thing of moment is as to whether we are in and of this life. Do we aspire to it ; yearn toward it ; devotedly seek its realisation? As day succeeds to day are we "a day's march nearer home"? Vain are our idealisings unless they are steadily becoming real. On the other hand hope need not falter. Along the line of true life the expectation can never equal the prospect. Heaven will be a great surprise. All we have to fear is that our aspirations should become empty vapouring. Our heaven is in a very real sense to be made, and we, at least, are to be made for it. So must we realise as much of heaven now and here as it is in us to do—"Thy will be done on earth!"—only so will our hope be pure.

EPILOGUE

Chapter XXVI

THE HISTORICAL VINDICATION OF CHRISTIANITY

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."—LUKE xii. 32.

"Behold, I make all things new."—REV. xxi. 5.

"It is Christianity alone which, as the religion of humanity, as the religion of no caste, of no chosen people, has taught us to respect the history of humanity as a whole; to discover the traces of a Divine wisdom and love in the government of all the races of mankind, and to recognise, if possible, in even the lowest and crudest forms of religious belief, not the work of demoniacal agencies, but something that indicates a Divine Guidance."—MAX MÜLLER: "Science of Religion."

"If, as both faith and philosophy attest, Christianity be the absolute religion, perennial because perfect, not destined to be superseded by anything better, because better is impossible, it must possess the power of rejuvenescence. It must be able to shake itself clear of whatever hampers the free expression of its eternal vitality. It is the worship of the Spirit, and the Spirit must and will rid itself of all bonds."—BRUCE: "Kingdom of God," p. 356.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE HISTORICAL VINDICATION OF CHRISTIANITY

CHRISTIAN thought and sentiment, aspiration, and hope are, at last, put to the test of practical experience. If they cannot support and inspire life they must come to nought. Every system of religion is tried in the crucible of history. Christianity itself must prove its power by sustaining the higher life of progressive nations, and by moulding civilizations. Truth and life must finally accord, the one but being the informing spirit of the other.

However briefly, and in merest outline, we feel impelled, therefore, to set up here the historical vindication of Christianity. This, in any full sense, would require the treatment of the history of the Western World from all its higher standpoints. It is a subject for volumes. There may, however, be interest and usefulness in a brief sketch—a mere bird's-eye view.

1. *The Historical Vindication includes as its first item the Transformation of the old World*

Roman historians and poets agree with broad-minded Christian writers, like the Apostle Paul, in describing the Roman world into which Christianity came as corrupt unto despair. There was an utter weariness of life. Suicide had become a

fine art. Faith had decayed. The civilization was characterised by "heartless cruelty and unfathomable corruption." The marriage-bond was treated with levity. The rich went to the greatest extremes of luxury. The populace could only be kept in order by expensive exhibitions of brutalising cruelty. There were armies of household slaves, the possession of whom was occasion for widespread social corruption. Religion had, in part, become the handmaid of licentiousness. Allow for the influence of the nobler-minded few; allow, too, for the clinging to simpler modes of life and faith in country districts, and it is still true that in all the populous centres life was hastening to decay.

In the Jewish nation and its Dispersion—its representatives in all the trading centres of Europe, Africa, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and Arabia—there might have been new hope for the world. The Jew carried with him faith in God as an overruling moral Power, but, in the days we speak of, the spiritualism of his prophets had been lost in a hardened formalism. The Jew's morality was strict, but it was external and finicking. It was a burden no other people would take on.

Christianity came in with its faith in a God of love and redemption, and its enthusiasm for the life of the common man. The followers of Jesus were inspired with a great love of "the lost," and wrought wonders among the masses. The new religion was as a day-dawn of hope and an accession of youth. Within a generation of Jesus' death

new standards of morality, and a new order of life, including an international confraternity, had been established among the few in almost every city of the Empire. By the end of the third century Christianity had become a power in the Roman world, and wherever it reigned a new respect for womanhood, a tenderer and more reverent love of the child, kindness to the slave as a brother, probity and purity, honour and affection had found their day.

When justice is done to every other influence the transformation of the old world stands supremely to the credit of Christianity. Christian ideals had commanded allegiance.

2. *The second Point in the Historical Vindication is the wonderful Power of renewing its Youth which Christianity has exhibited*

Monasticism, however much it may have shown its inherent weakness in later and more corrupt stages, has in its successive origins represented a revival of higher Christian life. We too often forget that the inroad of the northern hordes of barbarism necessitated the conversion of our own land and of Europe practically a second time. It was when these hordes were pressing in that the Benedictines in every European land set up their monastic establishments, as bulwarks of the Church, as homes of agriculture, and as sanctuaries of literature and art. Many a landscape took on its fertility and beauty from the hands of these monks ; many a tome of ancient literature was preserved, and

many a copy of our Scriptures was made by them. The learning and art of the day was concentrated in their monasteries. The ancient world, but for them, might have become to us a blank page, and the origins of Christianity itself have been swamped in oblivion.

Then in the twelfth century Bernard of Clairvaux set up the ideal of a more concentrated contemplation of God and of Divine things. He was the type of the unworldly saint—simple, pure, unselfish. He exerted an influence imperial in its scope though spiritual in its nature. He was the conventual monk who only moved out upon the world at some imperative call and returned ever with desire to his cell. "It is probable that Bernard wielded the strongest personal influence over his fellowmen that was ever exercised, by a man, in this world."

Following Bernard came Francis of Assisi in the early thirteenth century. He had caught sight of a worthier asceticism than that which shut itself up within convent walls. With him was born a new love of "Christ's poor." He sent forth his preaching friars who were to possess nothing and be entirely dependent on the daily gifts of those among whom they ministered. Their stories of the saints and of the miracles of the saints were often childish in the extreme, but there is no question that, in them, we have a revival of the simplicity of Christ and of His pure love of men.

Monasticism, and the companion-enthusiasm of the Crusades, constituted the revival of religion

within the Church. But the Christian religion had become so overlaid with priestism, with its sacrifice of the mass and its penances and indulgences, that the ecclesiastical system of salvation stood in glaring contrast to the simpler spiritual religion of the New Testament when men turned anew to its study. The Reformation gathered to itself many influences making for a new world—the modern world—but it was essentially the reassertion of the spiritual kinship (the sonship) of man to God, and of the right of direct access to the Redeemer. This made every soul, touched by the spirit of Christ, a free unit within the Church. The slave of dogma and of penance was emancipated. The Reformation was a revolution in the outer form of Christianity, but it was also a re-birth of its essential spirit.

The Puritan Revival in England only carried the principles and spirit of the Reformation to their legitimate conclusion, and sought to embody our religion in personal character, home-life, civil government, the Church, and common ways of strict uprightness.

In the Eighteenth Century Revival under Wesley and Whitefield the love of the masses again became an enthusiasm, and the 100,000 members whom Wesley gathered into the Societies which he formed, were won, in large numbers, from utter degradation to newness of life by a simple personal relationship of a vital kind to the Lord Jesus. Faith was seen to be less a matter of intellectual conceptions, and more one of heart and will.

This power of rejuvenation of the Christian religion reminds us of nothing so much as that great passage in Milton's "Areopagitica" where he is urging that we should accept all the risks of freedom. He says of the free nation as we should say of this religion: "Methinks I see a noble and puissant nation rousing herself, like a strong man in sleep, and shaking her invincible locks; methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance." So, again and again, has the religion of Christ renewed its mighty efforts to master the forces of life when corruption and darkness have accumulated. It has again and yet again risen as from the bonds of the tomb to a new and glorified life. There is in it a principle of life. It has known its winters of darkness and deadness, but it has had in it the capacity for recurring springs.

3. *The next important Point in this Historical Vindication is the Command which Christianity has of the modern World*

This command of the world is with the West not the East. The religions and civilizations of India and China run back to 1500 B.C. or earlier, and their great revivals to 500 B.C., roundly speaking. The systems of the East are more ancient than those of the West. Yet there is no question with us that manhood has come to fullest fruition in the West.

It is those nations, too, which have, according to our view, followed the purest and most spiritual interpretation of the religion of Jesus—which have been true to its real genius—which have gained and for so long retained the leadership. It is under the Christian religion, in its Protestant form, that manhood has been inspired to the greatest achievements, and, morally, we believe, has reached its greatest heights. We may see the good in other civilizations and faiths without blinding our eyes to the plainest facts. If we did not hold these things it would be folly to cling to our faith. We pass beyond the range of fact into the realm of speculation when we turn to the future, but there is certainly a growing faith in us that it is to the religion of Jesus the nations are turning, and that in Him they will find the Lord of life, in and through whom the highest that is in all of them, with all its peculiar charm or genius may reach its perfection. Meanwhile, it is a fact, let it stand for all it may be worth, that the Christian religion commands the nations which most fully influence the world's life to-day.

4. *Modern world-wide Evangelism has added a new Count to the Historical Vindication of Christianity*

During the nineteenth century the democracies of Europe have risen to assert themselves. With social and political revolt has gone the rejection of all that associated itself with the old order of things. The Christian religion has suffered, and in large measure wrongfully, in the *mêlée.*

Scepticism has been growing rampant, and the end is not yet. Alongside of this, for fifty years the doctrine of evolution has been compelling a reconstruction of thought from the foundations upward, and scepticism again has had full play. But meanwhile the history of modern missions has been developing. When William Carey set out to attempt great things for God and expect great things from God, he was initiating another kind of revolution. His proposition seemed to some of the pious a kind of blasphemy—a charge against God of neglect of the heathen. But the matter was to be understood in another light. Early evangelism had world-wide ambitions, but the immediate world of the day was the Roman world. The countries of the East were distant, almost unknown, even regarded as semi-mythical. They were only to be reached by over-land travel of thousands of miles. A modern consciousness of the world was born after the discovery of the compass, and the world-wide travel which was thence initiated. When revived Christianity had wrought its chief work in Europe, and specially when in England the eighteenth century Revival had had its effect, our religion awoke to a new vision of the lands afar lying in heathen darkness. The Church set out anew to win the world for Christ. The wonders of nineteenth century missions constitute now a great chapter in the vindication we are considering. Barbarous peoples—savages and cannibals whom the scientists hardly dared to class as human—have

put on the beauty of Christian life, under the influence of the Christian Gospel. There is now no land where the Gospel leaven is not working, and where the wonders of Christian redemption are not to be seen. The whole thing is phenomenal in character and extent if we put ourselves back to the early nineteenth century point of view. Christianity is at least profoundly moving India and China, and it has certainly won some of its brightest laurels in these lands. To Christian minds it gives promise of world-wide conquest. The brotherhood of the race, we believe, is to be realised under the influence of the Christian spirit, and as the outcome of the Christian faith in the Divine Fatherhood as revealed in Jesus Christ.

5. *Yet another Count in the Historical Vindication of Christianity is its Social Idealism*

This feature is not to be confounded with certain forms of social economic theory, nor is any prejudice in reference to such theory or theories to blind us to this feature. Since the Catholic Revival or since Reformation days we have been working towards an ever more profound estimation of the value of the individual soul. This is at the basis of modern democracy—a great advance on older forms of society. The people are to be respected. For every individual the largest possible opportunity is to be afforded to be all that it is in him to be. For him "for whom Christ died" room is to be found. There is no limit to his rights, for

there is no absolute limit to be set to his worth. His possibilities are as large as the grace of God. All this new and profound estimate of the worth of the single soul is but a re-birth of essential Christian thought. It was present in the early Christian passion for souls. But who needs telling that in a spiritual principle like this there is the seed of yet nobler democracies in which social well-being as yet undreamed of shall be realised? Who needs telling that in this profound sense of spiritual equality there is the dynamic or germ of the brotherhood of man—of one social system in which good-will shall reign? Dream cannot picture the world of the future. We only know that there is a social idealism in Christianity which is far from exhausted, and faith holds that the ideal is not merely ideal. There is a power which can realise it. It is found in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

6. *There is one Point more to be cited in the Historical Vindication of Christianity*

It is the enthusiasm and heroism of its saints. Nothing else in history can compare with it save the passion of early Buddhism, and that was rather keen sympathy with suffering than the resolve to master it. At the heart of Buddhism was despair of the world. The end was Nirvana. It was great in its stoical endurance, and in its self-abandonment. Buddhism is like the ministry of a mother who is persuaded her child must die; Christianity

is the fight with disease and death which is not yet hopeless. We have known in Mohammedanism a kind of scorn of death, and a reckless sacrifice of life, which was the means of translation to the Moslem paradise ; and there has been something of the like in the Japanese warrior. But Christian saints, for no warrior glory, have given themselves to redeem those of other nations and the outcasts of all peoples. They have died only on behalf of the good life. There have been numbers among them who "held not their life of any account, as dear unto themselves, if only they might fulfil their course, and the ministry which they had received from the Lord Jesus." The characteristic of the earliest martyrdoms has been repeated at Smithfield, among young Malagasy converts, among the native missioners from the South Seas to New Guinea, among those who have died in experiences like the Boxer Rising—that strange feature of "joy over-flowing in all their affliction" (2 Cor. vii. 4). They have died, not simply as submitting to death, but as exulting in it. They have rejoiced in such opportunity to tell out their devotion. This is—read it as we will—a miracle in the spiritual realm. Yet such deaths have only been typical of much more heroic, self-forgetful, less conspicuous service, rendered in Christ's name by patient servants of the distressed, the poor, the sinful, and of humanity generally. This kind of sacrifice needs infinite patience and boundless enthusiasm. It were easy, but vain, to mention

conspicuous names in philanthropic and evangelising ministry, for they are but samples of a great army, and he who has waited with the baggage has often been as serviceable as another who has been in the fighting line, and his heroism has been as conspicuous before high Heaven. It is the finest vindication of Christianity—in a sense its last and only vindication—that it has stood for self-forgetful service of humanity.

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